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MOJO
Music Magazine

150 REVIEWS
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WORLD EXCLUSIVE!

“I WASN’T MEANT TO MAKE IT THIS FAR...”

KEITH

LIFE AND CRIMES OF A ROCK’N’ROLL SUPERHERO

NEW ORDER

BERNARD SUMNER’S EMOTIONAL RESCUE

BLACK MAGIC! ACID FUNK! SLY STONE’S BABOON!?

THE AMAZING STORY OF RUTH COPELAND

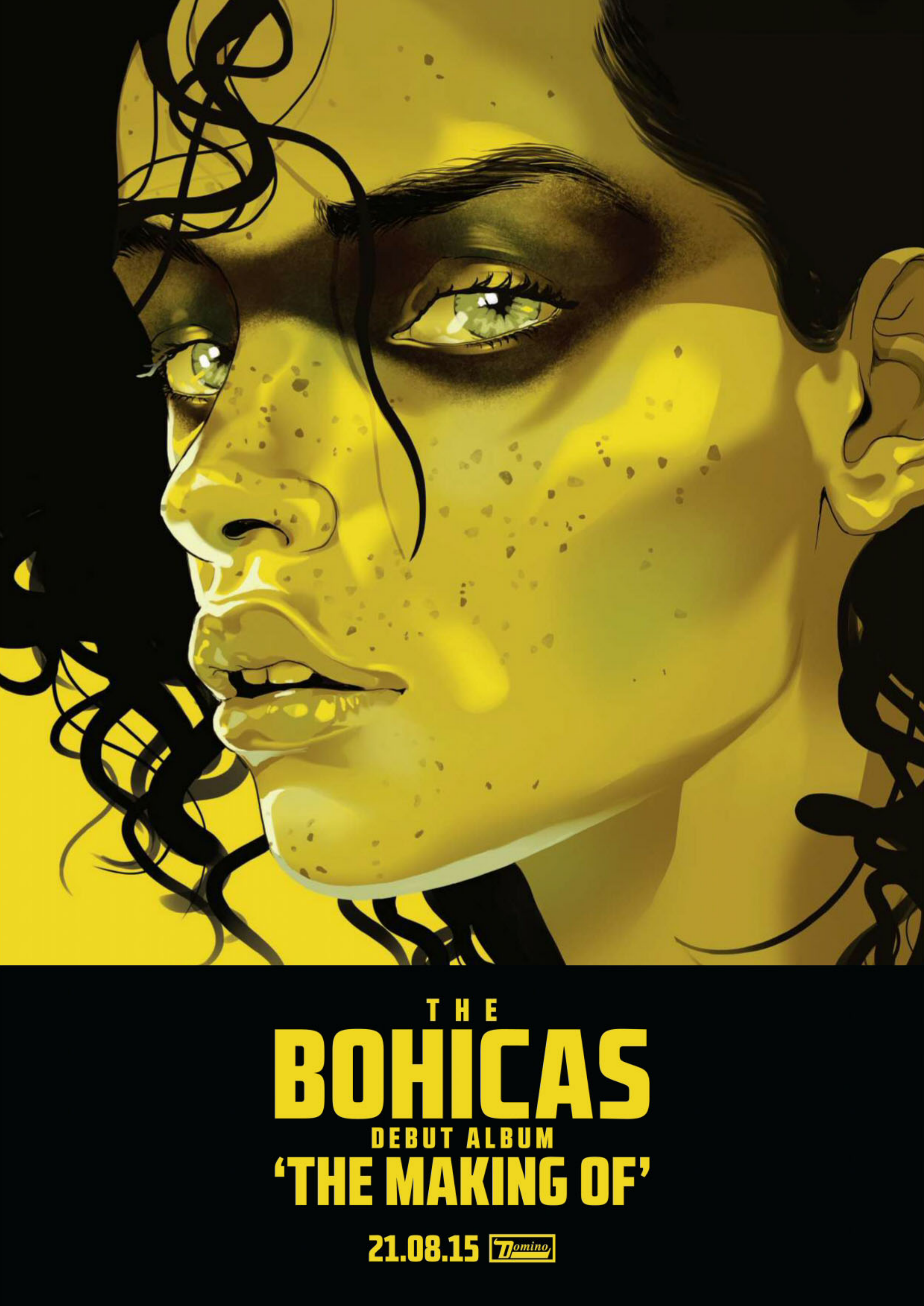
TAME IMPALA

INSIDE THEIR ELECTRO-PSYCH REVOLUTION

PLUS!
JAMES TAYLOR
WHAM! IN CHINA
CHRIS SQUIRE
GIANT SAND
SLEAFORD MODS
MERLE HAGGARD
PALMA VIOLETS

GERMS! POISON! UTTER FILTH!

THE DECLINE OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION UNCENSORED!


THE
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DEBUT ALBUM
'THE MAKING OF'
21.08.15
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SEPTEMBER 2015

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Retna/Photoshot

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> "I was having a laugh, being hedonisitic, but I wasn't happy."
>
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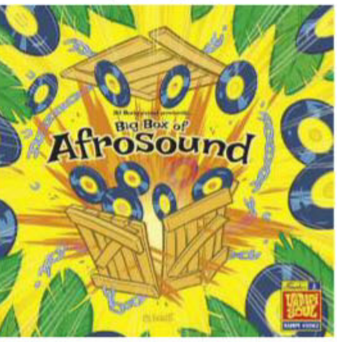
PISS
SUNNY VINCENT
AND
ROCKET FROM
TH3 CRYPT
VACANCY



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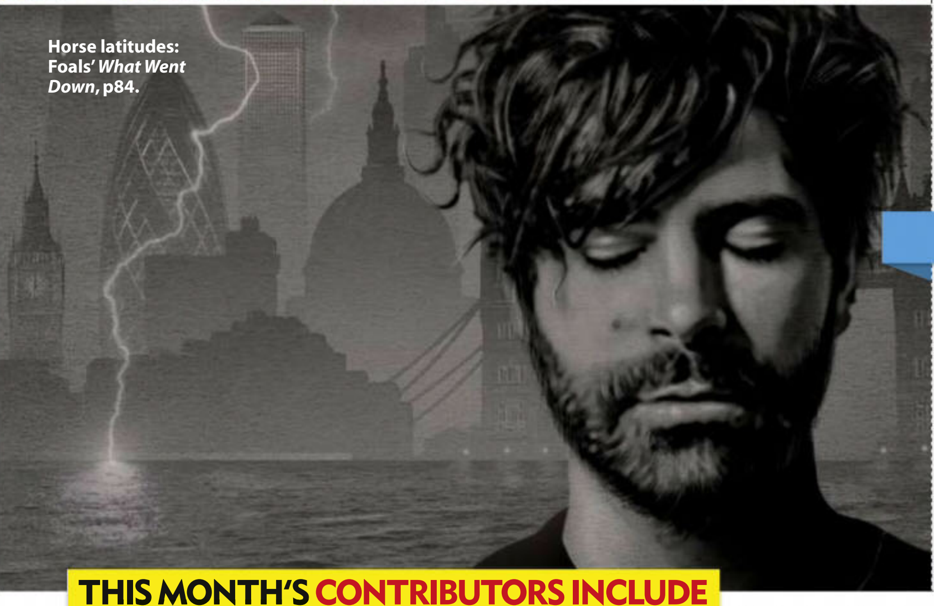

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THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE

Mark Juncker

Mark is a Manchester-based illustrator specialising in hand-drawn editorial portraiture using mixed media. His most recent works include illustrations for Disney and Next. A music fan, this month he illustrates our Foals lead album review (p85). More work examples can be found at markjuncker.com

Andrew Cotterill

"It's always a pleasure to be asked to shoot stuff in Manchester, especially when it's people like this," says Andrew of his Bernard Sumner shoot (see p38). "It's a great place, full of amazing musicians. Bernard was great to hang out with." To see more of Andrew's work go to www.andrewcotterill-photography.com

James McNair

Having first heard *Bridge Over Troubled Water* at his Gran's flat in Glasgow aged six, James was thrilled to finally meet Art Garfunkel. "If I sang you these notes could you sing them back to me?", Art asked him. Mercifully, only James's dictaphone heard the resulting shambles. To see what else the device captured of their meeting, turn to p48.

Mark Juncker, Piper Ferguson, Getty Images

EZRA FURMAN

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15 TRACKS THAT SHAPED THE HUMAN RIFF…

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SCOTTY MOORE, MUDDY WATERS, BUDDY HOLLY,
SANFORD CLARK, THE EVERLY BROTHERS, THE COASTERS,
LITTLE RICHARD, JIMMY REED & MORE…

1 SCOTTY MOORE TRIO

Have Guitar Will Travel

"Scotty Moore was my icon," writes Keith Richards in Life, discussing the influence Elvis Presley's guitar player wielded on him in his youth. Keith has since got to know Moore and has played with him, but the Tennessee-born guitarist still won't show him the lick from Elvis's 1955 blaster, I'm Left, You're Right, She's Gone. Here, on a storming, twangy solo tune from 1960, Moore's dexterous style away from The King allows him to shine in his own right.

2 CHUCK BERRY

Little Queenie

Richards openly admits that he based much of his style on Chuck Berry's studio guitar-weaving and, despite succumbing to the man's wrath first-hand (a punch to the face was famously administered), Keith has always lauded the volatile rock'n'roller. The Stones have also acknowledged their debt to Berry, starting with their first single – a cover of Chuck's Come On – and including this 1958 track in their live set, a glorious version appearing on 1969's *Get Yer Ya-Ya's Out*.

3 LITTLE RICHARD

Lucille

The first record Keith remembers buying is Little Richard's 1956 single Long Tall Sally, but in '63 he saw the Georgia Peach first hand when the Stones joined him on a UK tour. Keith recalls Richard's band blasting out an extended version of Lucille by way of introduction while the frontman kept the crowd waiting before exploding on to the stage from a random direction. "We learned their showmanship," says Keith of the impact of Richard and his band.

4 BO DIDDLEY

Diddley Daddy

Also on that 1963 tour was Bo Diddley, another firm hero of the Stones who covered a raft of his material early on. Alongside Bo's signature tune (a perennial of all beat groups) and Bring It To Jerome, this 1955 cut became a regular fixture in the band's early set. Keith's diary entries from the time refer to the track's inclusion at a point when London's Flamingo club billed the band as delivering "original Chicago R&B". "We'd never been north of bloody Watford!" quips Keith.

9 THE COASTERS

Poison Ivy

"Our first records were all covers," admits Keith. "We were just playing American music to English people." Among the tracks that the Stones recorded early on was this 1959 Leiber & Stoller classic which Los Angeles vocal group The Coasters had ridden to the top of the US R&B chart. The Stones cut two versions of this tune in 1963, the second of which was released in January of the following year on their self-titled EP.

10 FATS DOMINO

Blue Monday

Very early on in Life Keith acknowledges the fact that his mother Doris was listening to Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan and Big Bill Broonzy. It was this, he says, that meant he could tell the difference between the emotion evoked by Fats Domino on this original 1957 version of the tune, and the more anodyne but popular take on it by Pat Boone. Fats Domino would continue to exert an influence on Keith, the man cutting a widely bootlegged version of Bue Monday during the Long View Farm demos of 1981.

11 JAY MCSHANN

Confessin' The Blues

In Chapter Four of Life Keith details the war that broke out in England in the early '60s between what he refers to as "the Dixieland mafia" and those seeking to push the blues further into electric territory. Kansas City big band leader McShann remained a touchstone for both camps, nurturing the talents of saxophone legend Charlie Parker and blues shouter Jimmy Witherspoon in equal measure. The Stones used this 1941 tune as a signifier to confirm their role as Britain's leading electric blues evangelists.

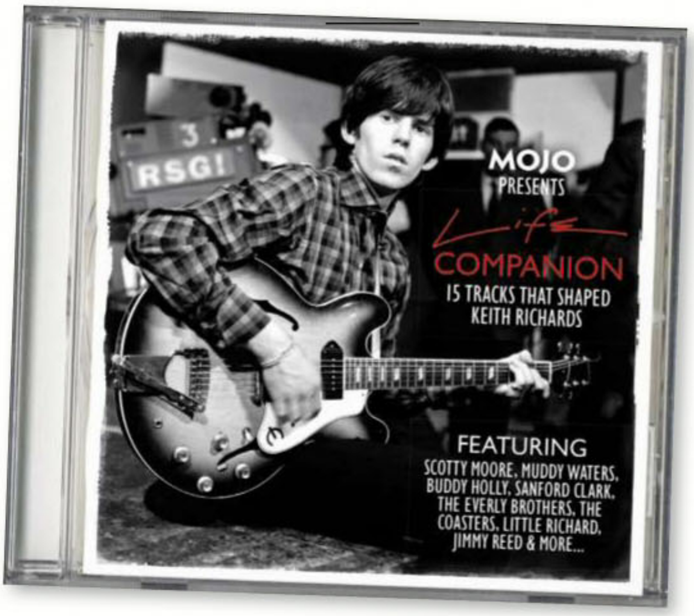
12 THE EVERLY BROTHERS

All I Have To Do Is Dream

"The best rhythm guitar playing I ever heard was from Don Everly. Nobody ever thinks about that," writes Keith, having eulogised the Everlys' "almost mystical" harmonies on this track. Also on that 1963 UK tour, the Everlys encapsulate the emotive romanticism of country music that Keith enjoys, with post-War pop smarts and Buddy Holly's rock'n'roll thrust to create a seductive sound that remains utterly intact close to six decades later.

Photoshot, Alamy (7), Getty Images (3), Rex

KEITH RICHARDS' 2010 AUTOBIOGRAPHY IS notable as a chronicle of mischief. At its heart, however, there lies a deep appreciation of music and a fascinating insight into the development of the birth of The Rolling Stones' sound. Richards is particularly lucid when it comes to outlining the band's *raison d'etre*, stating at one point that they created their music "in defiance of pop". Certainly, no group before them had managed to do what they did: to create a sound based on the deepest blues that was then sold to millions of people around the world. As MOJO speaks to Keith this month on the eve of his latest solo album release, we're proud to present this collection of music culled largely from the man's autobiography as well as his recordings away from the Stones. This is music that powered him and his band on to superstardom but, above all, it remains music that is truly timeless.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SCOTTY MOORE, MUDDY WATERS, BUDDY HOLLY, SANFORD CLARK, THE EVERLY BROTHERS, THE COASTERS, LITTLE RICHARD, JIMMY REED & MORE...
RSG!
3

5 BUDDY GUY

First Time I Met The Blues

Some 70 pages into Life, Keith mentions the "seminal sounds" and "tablets of stone" created by the great bluesmen like Howlin' Wolf, Lightnin' Hopkins and Buddy Guy, naming this B.B. King-inspired 1960 track that he first heard on a *Rhythm & Blues Vol.1*. comp. The Stones first met Guy while recording at Chess studios in Chicago in June '64. A firm friendship later grew and continues to this day, Guy jamming with the Stones on a Muddy Waters cover on their recent US tour.

Famous
Recording
EVERY WE

6 PAT HARE

I'm Gonna Murder My Baby

A forgotten hero of electric blues, Arkansas-born Pat Hare played with Junior Parker and James Cotton, and enjoyed stints with Muddy Waters and, occasionally, Chuck Berry. Keith's admiration for his heavy style is noted in Life in conjunction with this slow-dragging, 1954 track which became tragically prophetic when, in 1963, Hare shot his girlfriend and the police officer who turned up at the scene of the crime. The guitarist ended his days in jail, dying in 1980, aged 49.

7 MUDDY WATERS

Rollin' Stone

The name was one which Brian Jones came up with instantaneously while on the phone to Jazz News trying to promote the then-nameless band he'd put together with Keith and Mick Jagger. Richards recalls *The Best Of Muddy Waters* lying on the floor on as Jones made the call and, when asked what his group were called, he simply looked at the first track on the album. It happened to be this tough-sounding 1950 tune and, obviously, the name stuck.

8 JIMMY REED

Bright Lights Big City

The Stones were still in their infancy when Keith and Brian worked out that their interwoven, two-guitar approach would form the basis of the band's sound. The pair were fascinated by Reed's rhythmic style, Keith noting that "he understood the magic of repetition, of monotony, transforming itself to become this hypnotic, trancelike thing." Bright Lights, Big City – a Stones favourite that dates back to their beginning – showcases Reed's irresistible, shuffling approach perfectly.

13 BUDDY HOLLY

Learning The Game

Buddy Holly provided the teenage Mick Jagger and Keith with a bonding experience. When the pair first met, Keith was impressed with the fact that Mick had actually seen Holly at the Woolwich Granada in March 1958. "This man's got some shit!" remarked Keith. The pair's love of Holly would obviously manifest itself when the Stones reworked Buddy's Not Fade Away in 1964. Keith, meanwhile, would cover this tune in the '80s, and continues to return to it.

14 SANFORD CLARK

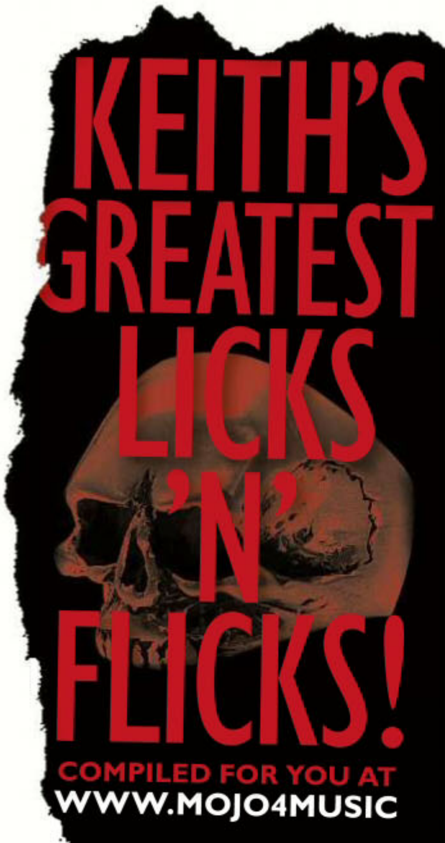
Son-Of-A-Gun

Keith's schoolmate Michael Ross introduced him to Sanford Clark – referred to by Richards as "a heavy-duty country singer like Johnny Cash". The Richards-Ross duo made their live debut "somewhere near Bexley, in a gymnasium" and played this spellbinding 1959 tune. After the gig came "a whole night in a park" with a couple of young ladies. "Maybe I've got a future here," mused Keith. But for Clark this track failed to repeat the success of his '56 hit, The Fool.

15 GORDON JENKINS & HIS ORCHESTRA & THE WEAVERS

Goodnight Irene

Goodnight Irene was originally recorded by Leadbelly in 1933 and has been widely covered, the latest version appearing on Keith's *Crosseyed Heart* album. The Weavers' interpretation from 1950 is included here because of Gordon Jenkins's lush orchestration, which echoes the sentimentality of Keith's emotive version. A fine end to Life companion.



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James Taylor

YOU'VE (STILL) GOT A FRIEND

What music are you currently grooving to?

I love Afro-Cuban music, particularly **Arsenio Rodríguez** who plays the tres. I listen to a lot of Brazilian music too, I love **Tom Jobim**, **João Gilberto**, the fathers of bossa nova. Also my contemporaries: **Milton Nascimento**, **Chico Buarque**, **Caetano Veloso**. The Brazilian tradition is so sophisticated and so profound.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

Ry Cooder's *Paradise And Lunch*. I played it for my son, he's learning guitar, and I saw him hear what I heard: the guitar is explosive.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

That's kind of embarrassing. I bought it at Kemp's Record Store in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The local team, the Carolina Tar Heels were top in their college league that year [1957] so there was a record celebrating that called Tar Heels Number One. It was a calypso-flavoured thing.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

Sir Paul McCartney because he continues to do amazing work. I'm interested in people who endure. A life in music is something that evolves.

What do you sing in the shower?

Recently, a song by a Brazilian artist **Djavan** called Oceano. It's beautiful. It changes keys before it goes into the chorus so it will really open up your range.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

If you want people to dance, a selection of **Earth, Wind & Fire**, **Albert King** and **Little Village** – **John Hiatt**, Ry Cooder, **Jim Keltner** and **Nick Lowe** – they've got some great tunes.

And your Sunday morning record?

Sketches Of Spain by **Miles Davis**. It's beautifully orchestrated, with Miles interpreting traditional Spanish themes, and it's a beautiful thing for a Sunday morning.

James's LP Before This World is out now

ALL BACK TO MY PLACE

IN WHICH THE STARS REVEAL THE SONIC DELIGHTS GUARANTEED TO GET THEM GOING...

Joss Stone

DEVON SOUL

What music are you currently grooving to?

Water Me by **FKA Twigs**, such a heart-wrenching creative artwork. **Marcia Aitken**'s I'm Still In Love With You, and **Althea And Donna**'s Uptown Top Ranking, too, I love them, and anything by **Courtney Melody**.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

The Miseducation Of ***Lauryn Hill***, I've bought that about eight times, starting when I was about 10. The message, the way it's paced, the atmosphere, the way she put her words together, it's so intelligent and emotional, like watching a beautiful film.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

Me and my sister went to HMV or Virgin, we'd saved up to buy *Spiceworld* by the **Spice Girls**. I still love it, I can't help it, it's total woman power – "If you don't like my mates, bugger off". I wish there was something like that for the young girls today.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

No one really. I've been inspired lots of people, but that's different I think. When I was 12 I'd listen to **India.Arie**'s adlibs, and play them back. I still can't do them though.

What do you sing in the shower?

I'll do this, (*makes brrrrr sounds with lips*), in a steam room or a spa. It loosens your lips, reverberates your vocal cords, like a massage! Or I'll sing Jesus Loves Me from The Bodyguard film.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

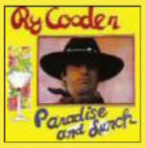
To dance? God, I don't often, but Looking For You off **Kirk Franklin**'s album *Hero*, is a *tune*. It's very church but in a modern way, it just lifts you up. I'll listen to Groove Is In The Heart by **Deee-Lite** as well.

And your Sunday morning record?

Well I've played gospel already, so, apart from birdsong, I met this guy in Swaziland called **Bholoja**, he calls his music 'Swazi-Soul'. He's like **Tracy Chapman** or **Joan Armatrading**, but with a male voice.

Joss Stone's Water For Your Soul is out on July 31

Timothy White



NOW PLAYING

- James Taylor just cannot do without Ry Cooder's '74 LP *Paradise And Lunch*, an eclectic work that combines Bacharach & David with old railroad-themed gospel.
- Joss Stone is, right now, getting her heart pulverised by FKA Twig's cetacean robo-soul lament Water Me from 2013's EP2.
- Michael Peña likes to welcome his Sunday mornings with Radiohead's '97 era-definer *OK Computer*.

Michael Peña

STAR OF ANT-MAN, AND MORE!

What music are you currently grooving to?

Grooving? I've actually, in a weird way, slowed down a little bit. It's more like **George Ezra**, **Elle King**, **Jason Derulo**. I travel a lot so I always put on, like, indie rock stations.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

Led Zeppelin *IV*. That's how I learned how to play the drums. I was a bass player for my band, and every time we were auditioning drummers, they wanted to show off and wouldn't give the singer time to sing. So I learned *Led Zeppelin IV* in, like, a month and a half. I would have to make a Rolling Stones playlist, too.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

My first record was a joint purchase, me and my brother. We bought the **Beastie Boys**' *Licensed To Ill* at a record store on the north side of Chicago. We just rocked to it and kept it low so my mom couldn't hear the swear words.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

My favourite drummer is still **John Bonham**, just amazing.

What do you sing in the shower?

Nothing, really. 'Cos I'm not a singer, I just put on some tunes. **Beck** is really good, and I'm friends with these guys, **Cage The Elephant**. I met them at Lollapalooza, the drummer is a golfer and I'm a golfer. A lot of drummers are golfers, I don't know why.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

Hip hop, old school, like **Notorious B.I.G**. And you know, **The White Stripes** are always good if you wanna pump yourself up. I remember before I had a kid and I'd go out… you gotta fill yourself with confidence.

And your Sunday morning record?

Probably **Radiohead**, *OK Computer*. It's still rocking but kinda chill. Or anything by **Bob Dylan**.

Michael stars as Luis in Ant-Man, on at your local cinema now

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THEORIES, RANTS, ETC.

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WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU READ JUST William? If you're Keith Richards, pretty recently it would appear. This is just one of the revelations in this month's cover story that presents the most intimate portrait of the Stones guitarist in recent times. Of course, Keith represents many things to so many people. As well as Pat Gilbert's unique New York encounter with the man, we are delighted to call upon the likes of P.J. O'Rourke, Andrew Loog Oldham and John Varvatos to hold forth on the sheer importance of *being* Keith Richards. Their thoughts start on page 68 in a world exclusive where Keith unveils his new solo album, *Crosseyed Heart*. Enjoy this issue and its soundtrack CD culled from the pages of Keith own rollicking memoir, Life. It's a glorious ride…

PHIL ALEXANDER, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The sea tells me

Shame on you for not including Blue Red And Grey from *The Who By Numbers* on your list of 'unique' Who songs in MOJO 261. To quote myself in my book on their music: "In which Pete, accompanying himself on ukulele and unsupported by the rest of the band, declaims the millionaire lifestyle in favour of the virtues of a simple life. An uncomplicated melody, performed with the kind of tongue-in-cheek sincerity that Pete had previously demonstrated on his first solo album *Who Came First*. The silver band adds to the sense of poignancy. Utterly charming." Since MOJO 260, I have gone Fleetwood Mac nuts, bought every studio album, but one thing must be said is that the albums leading up to Messrs Nicks and Buckingham joining the group are possibly the best albums the group ever put out: *Penguin*, *Mystery To Me* and especially *Heroes Are Hard To Find* are incredible albums and this period of FM needs serious attention paying to. Christine McVie never wrote a better song than Come A Little Bit Closer, and all because of the forgotten man Bob Welch – absolute genius in my book, shame he's not around for us all to tell him. He deserved better.

Chris Charlesworth, via e-mail

They be my charts

I'd like to thank you for Ian Harrison's review of *The Magical World Of The Strands* in MOJO 261 On its release I already owned Shack's *Waterpistol* and enjoyed it but nothing had prepared me for *Magical World…* The record is exactly what the review says, an entrance to a world both urban and tangible yet magical. It's a record that creates its own singular universe, somewhere between the bed-sit and the stars. Not a note is misplaced, yet there is a raggedness and warmth that makes it woozily human. All in all, one of the best records of the '90s. It is Mick Head's masterpiece and I hope this re-release, and your excellent review, draw more people to its beauty.

Matthew Edwards, Birmingham

That's an order!

Bravo Keith Cameron and MOJO for acknowledging that the '90s wasn't all Nirvana and Blur (the very thought!). MOJO 261's Urge Overkill article was a cracking tale from a time when American alternative rock was keeping myself and many of my friends alive. Hilarious to recall the debates over Nate & co's 'authenticity' and the spat with Albini; it was a subculture that thrived sufficiently for internecine mudslinging to seem not just possible but *necessary*, part of the fun! Which reminds me – what's keeping that MOJO Butthole Surfers feature?

Mark Barnabas, via e-mail

You've seen it all

Just a few lines to let you know how much I enjoyed reading the Fleetwood Mac article in MOJO 260. Good to hear from all of the so-called '*Rumours* 5' although personally I always preferred 'the White *Fleetwood Mac* Album' and *Tusk*. It's also worth noting that while much has been made of Christine McVie's absence from the band since the late '90s, for us British fans you actually have to go back to the Tusk tour of 1980 to find the last time all five of them toured the UK as a band. The Mirage tour of 1982 and the Dance reunion in 1997 sadly never left the States and Lindsey Buckingham bailed out before the Tango In The Night UK dates of 1988.

Having just got back from Glasgow I can say it was well worth the wait. At times there were tears in my eyes. Keep up the good work. It's always an informative read, though why not expand your live section? Having been to countless gigs from pubs to stadiums for 40 years, the live arena is always where good bands count most.

Alan Stutz, North Shields

The captain of the ship

I looked forward to reading the Fleetwood Mac interviews in MOJO 260 hoping to hear their thoughts on Bob Welch, the guy who saved their bacon after the core group left, and before the arrival of Buckingham/Nicks. If Welch hadn't taken the band to Los Angeles, moving them forward, the band had no future. FM owe him big time. And why was he not invited to their Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction? How did they feel about his suicide in 2012? My respect for this bunch has dropped to zero.

Nick Santangelo, Los Angeles

Not likely

Belated thanks and congratulations on a fine feature story chronicling the birth of the Grateful Dead in MOJO 259. And with features in recent months on Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, Linda Ronstadt and Jackson Browne, I have to say I'm feeling a mellow, late-'60s/early-'70s tingle all through my karma. Far out, man. Whatever else you have planned for 2015, however, I hope you're not planning to let the year slip by with nary so much as a mention of The Byrds' 50th anniversary?! It's hard to think of an American band from the '60s whose influence has reached farther than The Byrds: the jangle of McGuinn's Rickenbacker, introducing Dylan's songs to the (non-folkie) masses; influencing the Master himself in his decision to go electric; introducing the world to the extraordinary Gram Parsons and influencing everyone from the Eagles to Tom Petty, R.E.M., Wilco, the Gin Blossoms, Jayhawks and the whole alt-country genre. So how about a cover feature and new interviews with McGuinn, Crosby and Hillman?

Curtis Williams, Pamplona, Spain

The trick is living with yourself

I remember at the time of Richard Manuel's death I read a quote from Robbie Robertson who related a story regarding Keith Moon. Very early one morning Robbie Robertson was walking along the beach in Malibu when he noticed a figure lying near the water. As he got closer he realised it was a person and when he actually got to them he found a completely comatose Keith Moon, the water lapping against his head. Robertson said that at that moment he realised there were certain people amongst his friends and acquaintances that just weren't going to make it into old age, and that one of those was Richard Manuel. Similarly when Richard Thompson was asked about the death of Sandy Denny he replied that she was a person that just wasn't destined to make old bones.

So, it seems, was the destiny of Amy Winehouse, who from Tom Doyle's excellent article in MOJO 260 was clearly beyond any sort of help. On another point, can someone tell me what genre of music did Donovan not invent?! Dylan felt threatened by him? He was writing about ecology issues before anyone? He is constantly years ahead of his audience? He invented world music? I've read similar bollocks from him in the past but he really surpassed himself this time with his inference that he influenced *Sgt. Pepper*. I don't think I've ever come across a more immodest man in my life.

Alex Hunter, via e-mail

The code is the law

MOJO 260 was a fabulous edition; Emitt Rhodes, Fleetwood Mac, The Clash… just mesmerising, and then to cap it off, Andrew Male's review of the Robin Gibb retrospective, which was bought within an hour of reading. Robin's work is hugely underrated, and despite owning a bootleg of *Sing Slowly Sisters* it's pleasing to see an official release. A must-own for anyone who loves music, regardless of what generation you're from. Classic MOJO hitting all the right notes.

Chris Triggs, via e-mail

That's the trick, isn't it?

Sometimes I wonder why I keep buying MOJO. Self-obsessed sods like Paul Weller, silly reviewers who think torturing language is the way to go ("luxuriates in the twinkliest retro-futurism…", "catalogue complex enough that it's arguable whether or not this is their thirteenth full-lengther to date…"), sentimental articles that don't add anything to my knowledge or interest (the Dead) and then, quite unexpectedly, a highly entertaining article by Ian Hunter. I haven't read his Diary Of A Rock'n'Roll Star but clearly I need to get hold of that book. Which is of course why I keep buying MOJO. Every issue has at least one worthwhile discovery.

Hendrik van Oordt, Amsterdam

Erratum - MOJO's Life Companion

Hoagy Carmichael's The Nearness Of You is listed as the fifteenth track on MOJO's *Life Companion*. This track has in fact been changed to Goodnight Irene in celebration of Keith Richards' rendition on *Crosseyed Heart*. However, a design error means that Hoagy Carmichael is still listed on the CD sleeve. The correct track information, as appears on page 7 of this issue, runs as follows:

15 Gordon Jenkins And His Orchestra And The Weavers - Goodnight Irene
(Ledbetter - Lomax) Ludlow Music
First released: 1950

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WHAT GOES

LIEUTENANTSTYGIAN

DEMON DAYS

John Grant returns with *Grey Tickles, Black Pressure*, talks murder, purging and duets with Tracey Thorn, Goldfrapp and Amanda Palmer.

I just thought the owls were pretty cool," laughs John Grant of his birds of prey co-stars on the sleeve of his new album *Grey Tickles, Black Pressure*, out in October. "I didn't know Hieronymus Bosch liked owls too, but I like his stuff, so I guess we've completed our weird little triangle."

Medieval religious painter Bosch used owls as a symbol of Satan within his extraordinary, sensual/grotesque allegories of wickedness and redemption. Grant's newest work isn't as literally Biblical, but it's still a fantastical artwork populated by devils, with a shout out to classic 1902 horror story The Monkey's Paw, a song called Voodoo Doll and an accompanying promo video of Grant covered in blood holding a mallet.

"I'm such a big horror movie fan, that was fun to do," he says. The album title could only have been devised by a terrified linguist: 'Grey tickles' is an Icelandic phrase meaning 'mid-life crisis', while 'black pressure' is a literal translation of the Turkish for 'nightmare'. "I just fell in love with those phrases," says Grant. "It worked perfectly for what I was doing."

Recorded at producer John Congleton's Elmwood Studios in Dallas, Texas, over four weeks earlier this year, the electronic/acoustic album presents the Grant familiar from 2013's superb *Pale Green Ghosts*.

Within, he faces his demons in deftly realised, trenchant songs characterised by self-lacerating honesty. The tragicomic title track, for example, addresses his depressed and health-compromised state – Grant revealed his HIV-positive status from a London concert stage during 2012's Antony Hegarty-curated Meltdown festival – with mordant humour, observing, "They say… you must learn to let go/If I hear that fucking phrase again this baby's gonna blow."

Suitably for an album where the lovelorn state is central, it begins with Grant's Wigan friend Wes reciting the wedding day-favoured meditations on love from the New Testament text 1 Corinthians 13.

Knitwear man: (main) John Grant relaxes at home with a strigiform totem; (below, from top) bloodied with mallet in album promo clip; in Elmwood Studios, Dallas.

"I think it's beautiful verse," he explains, "and I come at that from so many different angles. I had the Bible shoved down my throat until my late teens, and it's what you were told, constantly, what love is supposed to be – we were told homosexual love can't possibly work. And it's used at weddings a lot, though that hasn't necessarily worked out too well either. I thought it was interesting to bookend the record with it, which is 12 songs of my actual human experience of what love has been, for me."

While love and its imperfections feature heavily – of the stirring, orchestral No More Tangles he observes, "I love talking about Stockholm Syndrome and co-dependency through the metaphor of '70s hair care products" – there are wider observations on the state of things.

The taunting electro-rocker You And Him, which features vocals by Amanda Palmer, includes the provocative line, "You and Hitler ought to get together."

"That song is pure rage," says Grant. "It's about hatred and not understanding how people can go out into the world with the intent of hurting other people. It's definitely about homophobia. I think about slavery, the Middle East, ISIS… and there are subtler forms of evil, if you will, like the tobacco companies or the American food industry. I mean, I've done my share of indulging in hatred, but I'm quite sure I've never gone out with the intent of humiliating or harming others."

Also guesting are Tracey Thorn, on monophonic pop intrigue Disappointing, and Budgie from the Banshees who drums on the LP's less programmed tracks. A previous but no less significant duet was when Grant joined Alison Goldfrapp on the Nancy and Lee classic Some Velvet Morning at the Albert Hall last November.

"Oh man, absolutely fucking amazing," he says. "That was a career highlight for me, the peak so far."

With European dates planned for November and a new album to share, it's likely there are more choice moments still to come. As John Grant says: "It's packed with stuff, this one."

Ian Harrison

"I LOVE TALKING ABOUT CO-DEPENDENCY THROUGH THE METAPHOR OF '70S HAIR-CARE PRODUCTS."
John Grant

Michael Berman (2)

TULLYBULLY

NATURAL BORN SEED DRILLER

Ian Anderson presents Jethro Tull: The Rock Opera!

When, in February 1968, someone in their agents' office suggested the name Jethro Tull, band boss Ian Anderson had no idea he'd be spending the next five decades fighting to preserve his identity against that of the inventor of 18th century agricultural marvel the seed drill. "It happened again two hours ago," he laughs. "I was doing an interview with a radio station in Chicago, and it was, 'Hey Jethro!'"

When Anderson's latest project, Jethro Tull – The Rock Opera, hits the road in September, he's hoping he might get his own name back for good, while at the same time give his pioneering agronomic forebear his due.

"I'd avoided knowing too much about Jethro Tull out of a sense of embarrassment," Anderson continues. "I had no idea who he was, and by the time I found out, it was too late to change our name."

Then last summer, during a continental car journey, Anderson found himself searching for accounts of Tull's life online. "As I did, I thought, That's weird. I had a song about that. As I went through the catalogue, I found many others that fitted events in his life." Even, surprisingly enough, Tull's signature song Aqualung. "I smiled when I read the story about young Jethro having suffered from a lung condition," he says. "After that, the project became a dead cert."

Other songs, including Back To The Family, Heavy Horses and Songs From The Wood, were hauled on board, some of them with minuscule adjustments, one or two others with new verses.

"The show is 85 per cent classic Jethro Tull," Anderson says, with a few new pieces, mainly "connecting recitatives to give credence to the reimagined story of Jethro Tull in the present day." Genetic modification of crops, animal cloning, and agribusiness ethics all feature.

Admitting that it would have been easy to present the show as "a Downton Abbey period drama with a flute", he acknowledges that reviving the term 'Rock Opera' might be "completely stupid. But when you put songs, arias, into a time frame with a clear narrative and characters, what else do you call it?" The show's only concession to theatrics will be the handful of guests who'll appear via a screen backdrop.

While laughing off suggestions that Tull's entire *oeuvre* was a hidden concept work about their namesake, Anderson lets slip a few surprising parallels. Twice he's unknowingly bought properties near Tull's original farms; he's also sat at his own seed drill, albeit "on the back of a 200hp tractor". More recently, he's also made his own discovery in the area of crop production.

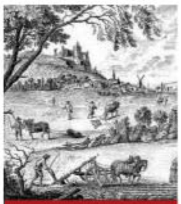
"For two years running," he explains, "my hot Trinidad Scorpion chili peppers have grown at three times the normal rate simply because I planted them in the same container as my wife's frangipani tree. Something strange is happening in the shadow of the frangipani."

Declaring this line would make a great album title, Anderson sounds more like a latter-day Jethro Tull with every utterance. Making a 21st century breakthrough in crop husbandry would suit 'Jethro' just fine.

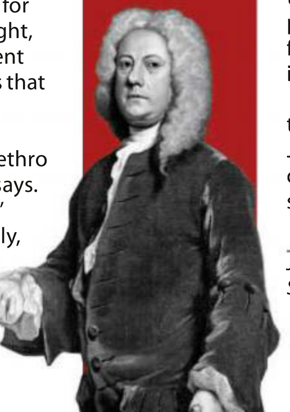
Mark Paytress

Jethro Tull: The Rock Opera tours the UK in September See jethrotull.com for info.

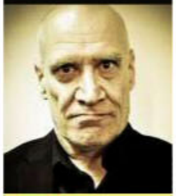
Plant music: (top) Ian Anderson has a brainwave; (below) the seed drill in use in the 18th century; (bottom) bewigged innovator (the real) Jethro Tull.



> "SOMETHING STRANGE IS HAPPENING IN THE SHADOW OF THE FRANGIPANI."

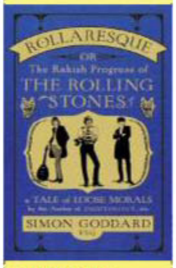


MOJO DIARY



JULY 31

MOJO is once again proud to sponsor the **Cambridge Folk Festival** that takes place between July 30 and August 2 at Cherry Hinton Hall. As well as running the MOJO Signing Tent (where you can meet artists and enjoy impromptu performances), MOJO will be hosting a live MOJO Interview with **Wilko Johnson** at midday on July 31 in the Club Tent. See you there!



AUGUST 6

Simon Goddard, lauded for his books Mozipedia, Ziggyology and the Postcard Records tome Simply Thrilled, publishes Rollaresque (Or, The Rakish Progress Of The Rolling Stones), a Hogarthian retelling of the Stones' lively years of '62-67, in cod-18th century vernacular. Promising to "scandalize, titillate, AMUSE and bring much SATISFACTION," it's published by Ebury.

AUGUST 22

HIT THE WEST! **The Fall's Mark E Smith** joins us for a live MOJO Interview at **Green Man Festival** in the Talking Shop tent on the Saturday. We could try to predict the tenor of the free-ranging badinage but that would be rash (wonder if he'll go into the lyrics of 2003's Contraflow and it's refrain, "I hate the countryside so much.") The Fall's gig comes sandwiched between shows in Latvia and Bognor Regis.

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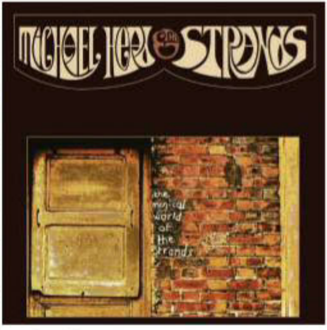
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MOJOWORKING

JEAN MICHEL JARRE

The electronic *instigateur* calls on heavy friends for pan-generational inspiration.

"I've had this new project in mind for quite a while," says Jean Michel Jarre, speaking from his studio in Paris. "It became much bigger than I planned."

With the working title E-Project, his fourteenth all-new studio set, will be his first album release in seven years, though as he says, its roots reach even further back. "Electronic music," he reflects. "I have been one of the first people really involved [with it], in the days when we were considered a bunch of crazy guys working with synthesizers, which were not even considered real instruments. Nowadays we know that electronic music is probably the biggest genre of music in the world, but it's far wider than EDM. So I thought it would be cool to exchange ideas and feelings, to merge DNAs and mix energy with artists from different times and generations."

Beginning three years ago in Paris, he created tracks using his bestiary of vintage analogue gear that were "sufficiently structured and organised but with enough space for the other artists to express themselves." A period of travelling, to London, Los Angeles and Berlin, followed, when he met musicians including Pete Townshend Laurie Anderson, Fuck Buttons, John Carpenter, Moby, M83, Armin van Buuren, Air and Vince Clarke. Songs were completed using virtual digital instruments alongside other hardware available locally, with the results touching on stuttering neo-trip-hop (Watching You, featuring Massive Attack's 3-D) and dramatic electronica (Conquistador, with techno DJ Gesaffelstein).

Jarre for the course: Jean Michel watches as his new project mushrooms, Paris.

"I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE COOL TO EXCHANGE IDEAS AND FEELINGS, TO MERGE DNAs AND MIX ENERGY."

The album also includes the last recorded work by Tangerine Dream's Edgar Froese. "It was recorded just before [he] passed away," says Jarre. "Tangerine Dream and myself started at more or less the same time, we were not even knowing we were doing the same music. I wondered, with them, to go back to what the origins of Tangerine Dream is all about, with the big modular Moog, the pure electronic sound, this ethereal, sci-fi type of mood they were expressing at the beginning. I must say we were immediately in sync. You can feel both of our worlds, we really succeeded to merge our sounds. Obviously, this whole album is going to be dedicated to Edgar Froese."

Jarre declares the experience an energising one: "When you have done quite a lot of albums, if you don't feel like you have anything to express, then don't do it," he says. "And this project, I had to do it. From day one I had exactly the same kind of excitement that I had even before *Oxygène*. I think it's not a matter of time. The tools and the parameters of creativity are probably a mixture of innocence and desire, and that is absolutely timeless."

Ian Harrison

FACT SHEET

Title: E-Project (working title)

Due: autumn

Producer: Jean Michel Jarre and collaborators

Songs: Rely On Me/ Travelator Part 2/ Zero Gravity/ A Question Of Blood

The Buzz: "The idea was not to work with collaborators in an artificial way, when you don't even meet people. It was really to share physically music and emotions. I was not sure even that these people I approached would be interested, I was really amazed and moved that they all said yes… they became kinds of friends, on the way."

ALSOWORKING

…he's back on the road and now **WILKO JOHNSON** has returned to the studio, with **Norman Watt-Roy** (bass) and **Dylan Howe** (drums). "We have started recording some stuff," he reveals. "I had a whole year off in hospital, flat on my back, full of tubes… but it's all coming back to me now." Will it address his brush with mortality? "Actually, when I was given the diagnosis, I went home and immediately started writing songs y'know, full of references to clocks ticking. So maybe." He'd also like to record with **Roger Daltrey** again. "Roger's very busy this year but I'd certainly like to do something again when the opportunity arises" … **DARLENE LOVE**'s *Introducing Darlene Love* arrives later this year, with the singer joined by homage-payers such as **Bruce Springsteen**, **Elvis Costello**, **Jim Webb** and **Joan Jett** (left). **Miami Steve Van Zandt** produces …Houston's veteran rap terrorisers **GETO BOYS** are recording a new album, *Habeas Corpus*, financed via Kickstarter. "We're still not kissing no ass to be accepted," they stress …fresh from the just-out *The Other Side Of Desire*, **RICKIE LEE JONES** plans to record more of her own material: "I don't see any reason to deny myself the pleasure and joy of writing. I'm old enough to have rediscovered the muse!" …**KURT VILE**'s new disc *B'lieve I'm Goin Down* is out later this year. **Tinariwen** (left) and **Warpaint** drummer **Stella Mozgawa** guest …**JONNY GREENWOOD** explains why **Radiohead**'s new album is taking its time: certain members' penchant for finding new technology…

Louis Hallonet, Alamy

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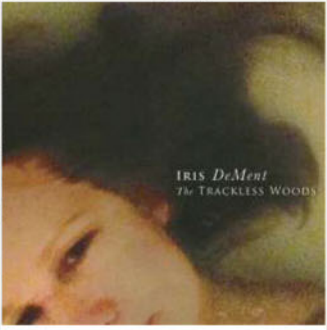
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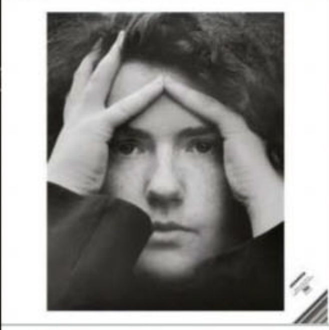

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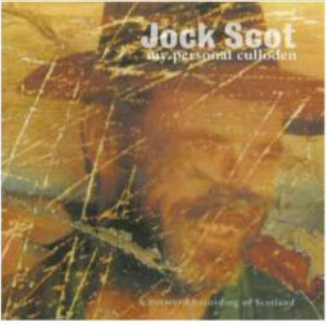
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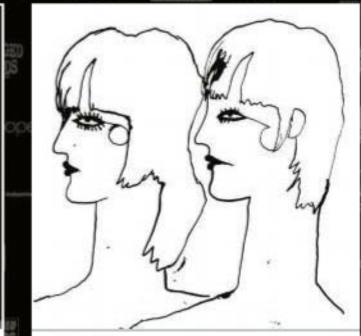

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WHAT GOES ON!

MOJOPLAYLIST

Bow down! Before the month's prime cover versions, left-brain electronics and Luther Vandross tributes.

1 FOUR TET

MORNING/EVENING

This two-track, 40-minute album was released to celebrate last month's summer solstice, but we can safely predict it will suit year-round listening. The Morning side finds Kieran Hebden blending beats and radiophonic synth tones with a beauteous sample of the 1983 Bollywood film song Main Teri Chhoti Bahna Hoon, sung by renowned Hindi movie singer – and the cricket-loving Nightingale Of India – Lata Mangeshkar. A warming, cosmically-attuned serenity descends before it gently evaporates. On the flip, Evening makes for lower-key, less immediately emotional listening, but the potential for inner space perambulation is still considerable.
Find it: *SoundCloud*

2 BLUR Y'ALL DOOMED
It opens with a smooth taste, before revealing a spikey, crunchy centre… that's the frenetic instro-MP3 that comes free with pots of Blur's The Magic Whip ice cream. The dessert, meanwhile, is a generous portion of above-average raspberry ripple.
Find it: *At your local Co-operative*

3 NEIL YOUNG MONSANTO YEARS
A near eight-minute, rusty, sardonic shuffle that takes aim at the gene-modifying agribusiness conglomerate that recently announced it wants to change its name (whatever for). And check the parent album's cover of Neil and Daryl Hannah as the American Gothic couple too.
Find it: *SoundCloud*

4 HELEN MOTORCYCLE
Where Liz Harris of Grouper plus mono-named voice Helen transmit a soothing one minute and 50 seconds of bikers-in-the-echo-chamber heavy shoegaze. From *The Original Faces* album, to be released in September.
Find it: *SoundCloud*

5 JIMMY SMITH SIDE-MOUTHIN'
Live from the mighty organist's North Hollywood Supper Club in July '77, superb Hammond and sax discursions and the kind of smokey audience chat/ambience that's often hard to come by.
Find it: *YouTube*

6 HANNAH PEEL PALE GREEN GHOSTS
The title-track from John Grant's 2013 LP rendered as twinkly, folk-pop curio. Peel's meditative vocal and inventive arrangements plunge Grant's brooding electronica into a warm bath of beats and chirruping synths.
Find it: *Rebox 2* (MY OWN PLEASURE)

The Today Programme: (top) Four Tet's Kieran Hebden, with (left) Lata Mangeshkar; (below) Hannah Peel.

"PEEL'S WARM BATH OF BEATS AND SYNTHS..."

ROKSAN
MOJO listens to all its music on Roksan equipment

7 AFX SERGE FENIX RENDERED 2
Where Richard 'Aphex Twin' James dons his on-off AFX code-name for beats and alien melody. Like a computer that has just become self-aware and wants to destroy you.
Find it: *SoundCloud*

8 BECK DREAMS
Heading for the jugular in the style of Get Lucky, Dreams is funked-up and hypercatchy, with detours into garage rock and a Chemical Brothers beatdown.
Find it: *YouTube*

9 MERCURY REV THE QUEEN OF SWANS
Kettledrums roll and oboes muse as the old romantics gently combine power ballad moves with adventurous sonic instincts.
Find it: *SoundCloud*

10 IRON AND WINE & BEN BRIDWELL THIS MUST BE THE PLACE (NAIVE MELODY)
Where the alt-folk South Carolina friends take Talking Heads' heart-rendingly happy/sad song and turn it into a countrified group hug.
Find it: *SoundCloud*

11 BLACK CHANNELS ORACLES
The title track from the Brighton/London duo's debut 10-inch EP on Death Waltz Originals is a swirling cauldron of noir-ish synth psychedelics, rain-patter beats and pure, soaring vocals.
Find it: *YouTube*

12 CORNERSHOP PINPOINT
Duetting with Trwbador's singer Angharad, 'Shoppers Singh and Ayers present a spry yet unfrantic SAW-meets-Genius Of Love summer jam. The video advocates dancing, on the streets.
Find it: *YouTube*

13 GOLDEN RULES PLAY SOME LUTHER
Marking 10 years since soul great Luther Vandross departed this life, vocalist Eric Biddines and (Radio 3's Late Junction presenter) Mara Carlyle bring this silken Rap&B smoulderer.
Find it: *SoundCloud*

14 ALELA DIANE AND RYAN FRANCESCONI THE SUN TODAY
The Oregon psych-folk singer and the former Joanna Newsom collaborator strike an autumnal note with this beguiling voice, guitars and strings poseur.
Find it: *SoundCloud*

15 N.W.A. STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON
Live at the BET Experience in Los Angeles on June 27, the reunited Ice Cube, DJ Yella and MC Ren play their signature blast, accompanied by visuals of the absent Dr Dre and the late Eazy-E.
Find it: *YouTube*

16 THE FALL DISNEY'S DREAM DEBASED
Available on Beggars' new vinyl repress of '84's *The Wonderful And Frightening World Of…*, here's MES in country mood reflecting on a fatal rollercoaster accident. Also out: '85's *This Nation's Saving Grace* plus new B-sides LPs.
Find it: *YouTube*

17 BLACK CAB VICTORIOUS (MIKEY YOUNG REWORK)
Grooving yet dystopian retro-future, like Staying Alive Bee Gees suddenly finding themselves in the Escape From New York movie. From the Melbourne outfit's new LP *Games Of The XXI Olympiad*.
Find it: *SoundCloud*

18 THE HOT PEOPLE (FT. BLOOD EVERYWHERE) BUMMING IS REAL
5am mental breakdown house track with Latino and space disco shifts, and a beat that just won't stop. We dunno much about The Hot People but we applaud their taste in dressing gowns.
Find it: *SoundCloud*

19 LORNA SMOTHERED IN HUGS
GBV's mid-'90s fuzz-fried archetype ironed into a starkly smooth acoustic cover by Nottingham six-piece Lorna. Sharon Cohen-Rolfe's glassy co-vocal locates the original's yearning core.
Find it: *YouTube*

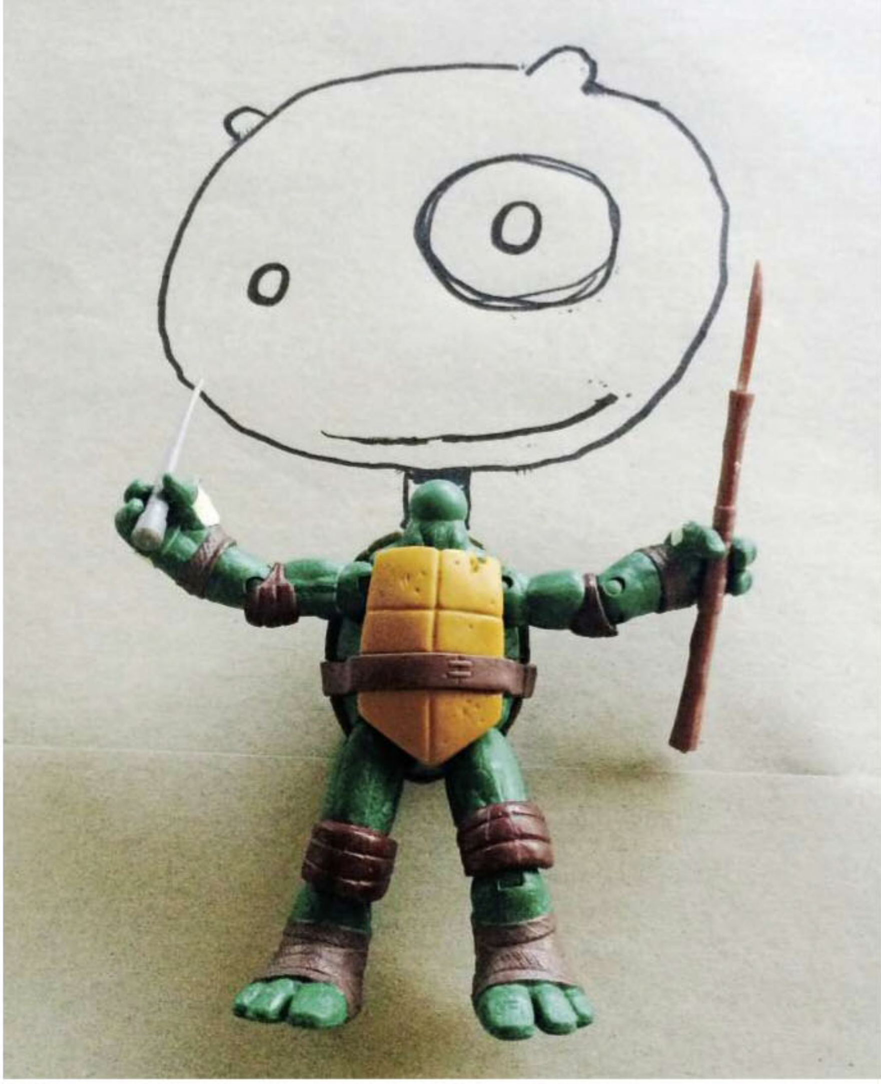
20 SEALINGS I'M A BASTARD
Brighton trio crank it up like a Numanoid JAMC. From the LP also called *I'm A Bastard* (do they do T-shirts?).
Find it: *SoundCloud*

PA, Getty Images

SELFPORTRAIT

HOWE GELB

Giant Sand's grafter in his own words and by his own hand.



Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle lobotomy: Howe Gelb by Howe Gelb.

I'd describe myself as… a lazy bastard. A filibusterer of song. A myopic heart's haphazard experiment gone wrong. On the outside: eyebrows that appear to have a mind of their own. Random juts of exaggerated jaw. Pronounced nose shape that couldn't make up its mind. Hair surrendering to atmospheric pressure. Two lightly browned eyes in various sizes.

Music changed me… in every way. It poured out like an elixir; a tincture against the ills of gravity. Provided a corner to occupy. Nicely allowed this stunted social demeanour to be plunged into overt social overload. Granted reprieve from inquisition. Demanded nothing but unconditional surrender. Injected 'duende'.

When I'm not making music… nothing escapes its own soundtrack.

My biggest vice is… passion.

The last time I was embarrassed was… doing this interview.

My formal qualifications are… I once wore a tux.

> "MY BIGGEST REGRET IS NOT ASKING BOB DYLAN FOR A HELLO."

The last time I cried was… there is a phenomenon that occurs at 35,000 feet above Earth when encased in large cylindrical shaped vessels; a tear letting ensues while viewing films. It makes no sense. Perhaps it's the vulnerability of the body hurtling in tremendous speed at precarious heights, but even the worse films trigger amplified emotions. The last one had me floodin' the seat from the previous seven funerals I hadn't even moistened up at. A real gusher… and a terrible film. Perhaps psychology should be a prerequisite in becoming a flight attendant the way clairvoyance would be handy in a waiter.

Vinyl, CD or MP3? …listen. There's nothing like tape. It records and delivers the sound magnetically, which is in parallel correlation to the Earth's own magnetic personality. So. Choose: cassette, 8-track or reel.

My most treasured possession is… a giant guitar I have now that I didn't expect to buy. It chose me and slipped into my clutchings. A 1947 Epiphone with a sliding DeArmond pickup. Had only one owner. There's a belt buckle rash on the back shaped like a heart. Smaller soft parallel scrapings indicate they mighta been made by a wheelchair later in life. It always fills the strummer with unexpected joy and makes one younger during such embrace. I would have loved meeting that one owner.

The best book I've read is… there is no such a thing.

Is the glass half-full or half-empty? …oh that pesky glass. I don't reckon it's never ever either. It's always just a little bit more one way or the other. But half? How is that possible. That's like being precisely on time.

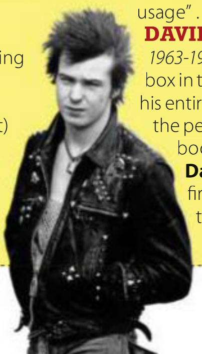
My biggest regret is… not asking Bob Dylan for a hello. Neil Young I made laugh once and that was a great feeling. But Bob, I couldn't even ask him for a hello 'cos he's already given me too much.

When we die… we all go to the same place. Depending on our preparation, it will seem like hell or feel like heaven. It's probably better to work on that eventuality here than do the math in the aftermath. If you need to understand the model of existence, think of life as if it's on a circle of experiences that do not quite connect, but continues onward much like the shape of a spring. If you pull back far enough to see this shape, you would find that that spring shape doesn't go in a straight line, but instead forms another larger spring shape. In this design we can grasp the shape of eternity. And it somewhat explains the feeling of us being here before in the circle of events while still moving ahead. Tricky to explain… but hey, that's life.

I'd like to be remembered as… I almost drowned a few years ago in the Puget Sound, at a corner of it called 'Gig Harbour'. I'm tickled I didn't, but it left me with the thought of a fine epitaph: "Drowned in Sound at Gig".

MONDOMOJO

…'Bring A Bit Of Rebellion To Your Wallet', suggested cash services company Virgin Money last month. Like going on a mad spending spree and not paying it back? Actually, they were referring to their new **SEX PISTOLS** (Sid Vicious, right) themed credit cards, available in *Never Mind The Bollocks* or Anarchy In The UK livery. Designer **Jamie Reid**'s response, revealed by writer **Johnny Sharp**: "If it was up to me I never would have agreed to such usage" …coming in September, **DAVID BOWIE**'s *Five Years 1963-1973* is a luxurious 10-album box in the usual formats covering his entire output plus rarities from the period, remastered, plus a book and a foreword by **Ray Davies**. Excitingly it's the first in a series, but whither the Deram recordings? … post-rock/shoegaze/goth aficionados take note: coming soon is a supergroup featuring **Mogwai**'s **STUART BRAITHWAITE**, **Slowdive**'s **RACHEL GOSWELL** (right), **JUSTIN LOCKEY** from **Editors** and **ROBERT SMITH**, who, having recently sung with **Paul Hartnoll** and **The Twilight Sad**, is clearly up for collaborations …as are **THE ROOTS**, who played a version of hip hop cornerstone Rapper's Delight with Philadelphia's mayor **Michael Nutter** at the city's 4th Of July Jam. The mayor did well, laying down a challenge to his peers (try not to imagine **Boris Johnson** singing his Desert Island Disc choice Start Me Up with **The Rolling Stones**)…



Sam Jones. Omer Kreso, Alamy

Their Kinshasa is your Kinshasa: Mbongwana Star (from left) Liam 'Doctor L' Farrell, Randy Makana Kalambay (front), Coco Ngambali Yakala, Rodrick 'R9' Matuzolele Dialungana, Theophile Nsituvuidi Nzonza (in wheelchair), and Jean Claude 'Sage' Kamina Mulodi.

Florent de Le

MOJO**RISING**

MBONGWANA STAR

From the wreckage of Staff Benda Bilili, shapeshifting electronic punk Afrique.

Sounding like the unholy result of a night of passion involving The Prodigy and Congolese soukous titans Zaiko Langa Langa, but with added spacemen, Mbongwana Star's debut album, *From Kinshasa*, is the phoenix that rose from the ashes when Staff Benda Bilili discovered that 15 years of pushing their home-made wheelchairs to Kinshasa zoo – most of the band were polio survivors – to play music together as friends cannot prepare you for the pressures that a little success brings.

"Look, we are all still friends," says co-founder Théo Nsituvuidi, who along with fellow singer-guitarist Coco Ngambali were ready to move on by the time Staff Benda's second album was released. "We still say bonjour to each other, but that was the past. Everybody has his own path now." Like most people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the band has no desire to live in the conflict and instability of the recent past.

"Our plan was always to continue music but to change. We used to play one way, but because we had to change everything immediately, we stripped it all down. Coco and I played guitars for Staff Benda, we don't play them now. It's about change ["mbongwana"] and liberté. We are using our knowledge of Congolese music but we are finding new doors."

"EVERYTHING IS NOISE, DISTORTION, ALL CRANKED UP... THAT IS KINSHASA."

Recruiting a group of young musicians from Staff Benda's entourage of street kids – including Randy Kalambayi, who had been the 10-year-old percussion prodigy on that group's first album – the two veterans found themselves hitched to a group that had no memory of the glory days of Congolese rumba.

Instead, they were attuned to a world of hip hop and electronica. It was suggested the new group might want to work with an outside producer for the first time, and Irishman Liam Farrell (aka Doctor L), known to friends of the band for his work with Tony Allen, flew to Kinshasa where, *Exile On Main St.*-style, a villa had been rented for the sessions.

"Nobody knew where we were going," says the Doctor, "They kept composing the songs, and we remodelled this material to create an original band that was the sound of the city where they live. I met so many crazy people after I arrived, the people in our videos and on the album sleeve, like the Kinshasa Cosmonaut, a street artist. The city is 10m people. People from the country, these different cultures, are moving there. It is the New York of Africa. Everything is noise, distortion, all cranked up. To me, that is Kinshasa."

"If it stays hidden, it doesn't matter how good it is," adds Théo, explaining why his new band like it when the needles are in the red. "If it's not being heard, it doesn't exist."

David Hutcheon

FACT SHEET

- Congotronics originators Konono No. 1 guest on Malukayi.
- Before arriving in Kinshasa, producer Doctor L had never heard Staff Benda Bilili. Previous credits include Les Négresses Vertes, Les Rita Mitsouko, Tony Allen and Salif Keita.

KEY TRACKS

- Suzanna
- Kala
- From Kinshasa To The Moon

MINDBLOWERS!

LIGHTNING BOLT

The Rhode Island noise attack duo choose strange platters that subvert the rules and tap into the child-like.

1 SUN RA
LIFE IS SPLENDID

(Total Energy, 1999)

Brian Chippendale (drums, vocals): "In 1972, '73 and '74 Sun Ra recorded three live albums, at Ann Arbor. The 1972 one [*Life Is Splendid*] is insane. You can drop the needle anywhere. It goes from crazy, free, weird, improvisational jazz stuff into these multi-drummer mammoth deep groove jams. For me it makes a lot of sense to go between those two worlds. If other drummers come over, this is the Sun Ra album I play to them. Another really weird Sun Ra LP is *Strange Strings* [Saturn, 1967], the one where he handed out string instruments to all his musicians who didn't play stringed instruments and said, 'Play!' It's pretty ugly, though, and it doesn't get into a deep hypnotic groove like this whatsoever."

Moondog
H'art songs

2 MOONDOG
H'ART SONGS

(Kopf, 1978)

Brian Gibson (bass): "This whole record is brilliant. The melodies are so catchy but at the same time complex. It sounds beautiful. But I particularly like the track Enough About Human Rights. I usually never listen to music for lyrics but these lyrics are so interesting. I don't have a political agenda because I'm not sure I believe in human beings as a good thing, but he kind of hits the angle that I totally agree with. Kind of misanthropic. 'What about Whale Rights?/ What about Snail Rights?/ What about Seal Rights?/ What about Eel Rights?' His whole persona is so cosmic and so detached from world issues that I just love it. It's the way I remember feeling about the world when I was a child."

3 HARRY PUSSY
UNTITLED

(Not on label, 1997)

BC: "This has no title, and no song-titles. The cover's got like a shitty drawing of a dude's face, blown out and repeated on it. I got it from the band when they toured in, '97, '98. It's so tight but so loose. You have these two guitars playing the loosest shit you've ever heard, but in unison, which is kinda counter-intuitive, both playing this amazing fluid line and then you have Adris Hoyos on the drums, this tornado that turns on and off. A lot of their older stuff is a lot harsher but there's a warmth to this one. They really encapsulate this chaos and energy. They felt alive. And in guitarist Bill Orcutt you hear a little of that tiny old world music, but as this weird new drunken way of flying."

impi
IMPI·IMPI·IMPI
impi (DUB VERSION)

4 IMPI
IMPI

(Jive 7-inch, 1982)

BG: "I discovered this on YouTube. I'd been listening to Roedelius and then it suddenly played this. It's by John Kongos but it's not what you would think. It sounds like The Muppets, not Paul Williams show-tunes Muppets, but more twisted, with this tribal beat and flutes playing these really happy melodies. When I first heard it I thought, This is the best song I have ever heard in my life. It appeals to certain weird things about my own personal character and beliefs about music. I'd really like to make a whole record like this. I listened to his other stuff and didn't really like it. This feels different. It's so playful, goofy and childlike. This guy isn't trying to be cool."

ADRIANO CELENTANO
PRISENCOLINENSINAINCIUSOL

5 ADRIANO CELENTANO
PRISENCÓLINENSINÁINCIÚSOL

(Clan Celentano 7-inch, 1972)

BC: "I discovered this on YouTube and it's one of the best songs ever. It's by this really famous Italian singer and actor and it is based on the idea of how English sounds to non-English speakers. It's so funny, but rhythmically, it is really complicated stuff, but with a real groundedness."

BG: "So much good music is people imitating stuff they like, but something they don't understand about their own hand is coming through as well. As an artist you want to create something that sounds like it didn't come from you, like it came from outside of your ego. So when you hear something, like this, that's really alien, it's super-intriguing. How do you subvert all the rules you've learned and tap into that child-like thing?"

As told to Andrew Male

Brian capers: Lightning Bolt's Gibson (left) and Chippendale big up Wilson, Keppel and Betty.

Natalja Kent

Beeb backs 'kill Boris' band

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National Grantham: Jason Williamson on-stage; (inset, top) the Mail excoriates, over-laid by Sleaford Mods' *Key Markets*.

Alamy

ROCK'N'ROLLCONFIDENTIAL

JASON WILLIAMSON

Sleaford Mods' arch-dissenter talks anger, band beefs and drinking at work.

Sleaford Mods' enraged performance at this year's Glastonbury coincided with a choice salute from the Daily Mail. Headlined "Beeb backs 'kill Boris' band", it hissed at the BBC's decision to televise this "foul-mouthed Left-wing duo" and their "tirade against Boris Johnson".

Few bands of the moment warrant this kind of satisfying tabloid teeth grinding. Having come to notice with 2013's *Austerity Dogs* (but extant since 2007), the Nottingham two's new album, *Key Markets*, is an incensed dose of punk-hop aggro-logorrhea, ideal for riling the smug. Live at Glastonbury's John Peel Stage, Jason Williamson is the ideal frontman for their multi-pronged sedition. He's like a sociopathic, sashaying Quasimodo, nervous tic'ing as he spittle-barks his bottom-rung hallucinatory accusations, giving gurns and thumbs-ups between songs. All the while, tunesmith Andrew Fearn mans the laptop and swigs a Red Stripe.

In person, Williamson is courteous and thoughtful, with tattoos of the Little Chef logo and the old British Rail symbol on his right arm. Currently off the beer, he drinks from a bottle of water and warns, "There's no massive game plan."

Did you enjoy the Daily Mail story?

Fucking hell. That's better than any press we've had. Me and the wife were talking about it and she said, "It's got to be a secret fan." It was a real bit of positive promotion – "the self-titled punk voice of the underclass"! People were like, "It's the new 'Filth And The Fury'," but it's not really, it's not on the front cover of The Sun – *that* would be brilliant. [Boris Johnson], if I sit down and think about it, I do fucking hate him, I hate all of them who've kept me and my ancestors in shit jobs for eternity, and they'll keep doing that.

How do you regard your older stuff now? It sounds raw.

We did that *Retweeted* thing last year with a selection of the old tunes on it, and some of the wordplay and the vocals are really fucking good. But some of it's shit, quite throwaway and just really angry. My attitude at the time wasn't great.

A song like Chop Chop Chop – which involves crack, McDonald's and "knobbly knees" – suggests desperation.

It's fucking horrible isn't it? But my perception at the time was like that. I was working in the Little Chef flipping burgers. I'd drink at work, I'd drink on the way home, I'd get home,

SOUND AFFECTS

MOD KNOWS

Williamson's current hot five.

1 **Bert Jansch** *Bert Jansch* (TRANSATLANTIC, 1965)
2 **Wiley** *Snakes & Ladders* (BIG DADA, 2014)
3 **The Damned** *Machine Gun Etiquette* (CHISWICK, 1979)
4 **The Specials** *More Specials* (2 TONE, 1980)
5 **The Jam** *Sound Affects* (POLYDOR, 1980)

get pissed and get stoned. Day off, go out, take drugs, get pissed. That was my life for, like, 18 months, when I'd gone back to my mum's and the idea was to straighten myself out! That was all written around that period. You can kind of miss them days, because you can only get creativity like that in that situation, as much as it was horrible and nobody gave a fuck and you'd get two people turning up to gigs. But the songs, in a way, were kind of fucking bulletproof. I don't regret them, because I think I communicated the absolute frustration of that time.

What happened?

I just sobered up a bit, and grew up. I'm still a rat-bag when I wanna be, but my wife kept saying, she was my girlfriend then, "You need to look around you and not take it from within all the time, just using aggression and self-pity." I realised there were a lot more things to attack rather than myself.

That said, you've had more recent press contretemps with Weller, Kasabian and others…

Yeah. I get a lot of stick for it. People saying, "Oh, fucking Weller don't like you." Well at least he's heard of me. I was jumping around the fucking kitchen – "The bloke I had plastered all over my bedroom wall has called me a cunt, fucking brilliant!" To give him his dues, he's always fucking putting stuff out isn't he, and he wrote fucking Eton Rifles, for fuck's sake. But I used to get such a buzz off bands when they'd slag people off. My wife was like, "You've got a bit of status now, you could really crush people." She's got a point. But where do you draw the line? If I think someone's shit I'll say so, it's the basis of the band. You're almost encouraged to say fuck all about anything, ever.

Is it odd that you go down so well on the Continent?

A lot of people have got English as a second language, so they can pick bits out relatively easily… it still baffles me how it does connect, though, 'cos it's quite local-speak and it's fast. It's got to be the anger and the energy – it's organic, it's untainted, it's not going along with any company protocols. I think it reminds them of the early punk stuff, '70s first wave, second wave even.

Tell us something you've never told an interviewer before.

If we get money from merch, I've been giving a lot more of it to people on the streets. I gave a tenner to this bloke in Manchester and he was like, "Oh mate, that's too much." It's just wrong. I felt guilty for a long time about leaving work, too, and guilty about actually feeling a bit happy. I've been a bit better of late. I've rationalised it, and so you should.

Ian Harrison

LAST NIGHT A RECORD CHANGED MY LIFE

MERLE HAGGARD

The country outlaw legend hails Jimmie Rodgers' 1928 smash Waiting For A Train.

Jimmie Rodgers recorded a hundred and somethin' songs, and 50 of them were standards – In The Jailhouse Now, Frankie And Johnny, T For Texas, Breakman's Blues… the list goes on, and nobody sang 'em as well as he did. But Waiting For A Train was probably the song that stuck out for me. I was about 16 years old, raised in a Santa Fe boxcar. My mother bought me a birthday present, some 78 records, and they were Lefty Frizzell singing Jimmie Rodgers. These songs were about travelling, an exciting life. When I heard what Jimmie Rodgers sung about, I thought I had to live those songs.

I knew his father was a railroader, and he became a railroader, and he was into what they called vaudeville at a very early age. His career in recording started in 1927 and I think he contracted TB in '31, and died in '33. I talked to [Louisiana] Governor Jimmie Davis, who actually recorded in the same building as Jimmie Rodgers, and he said he had medical people around him, he was terribly ill. He managed to go ahead and record a lot of records that way.

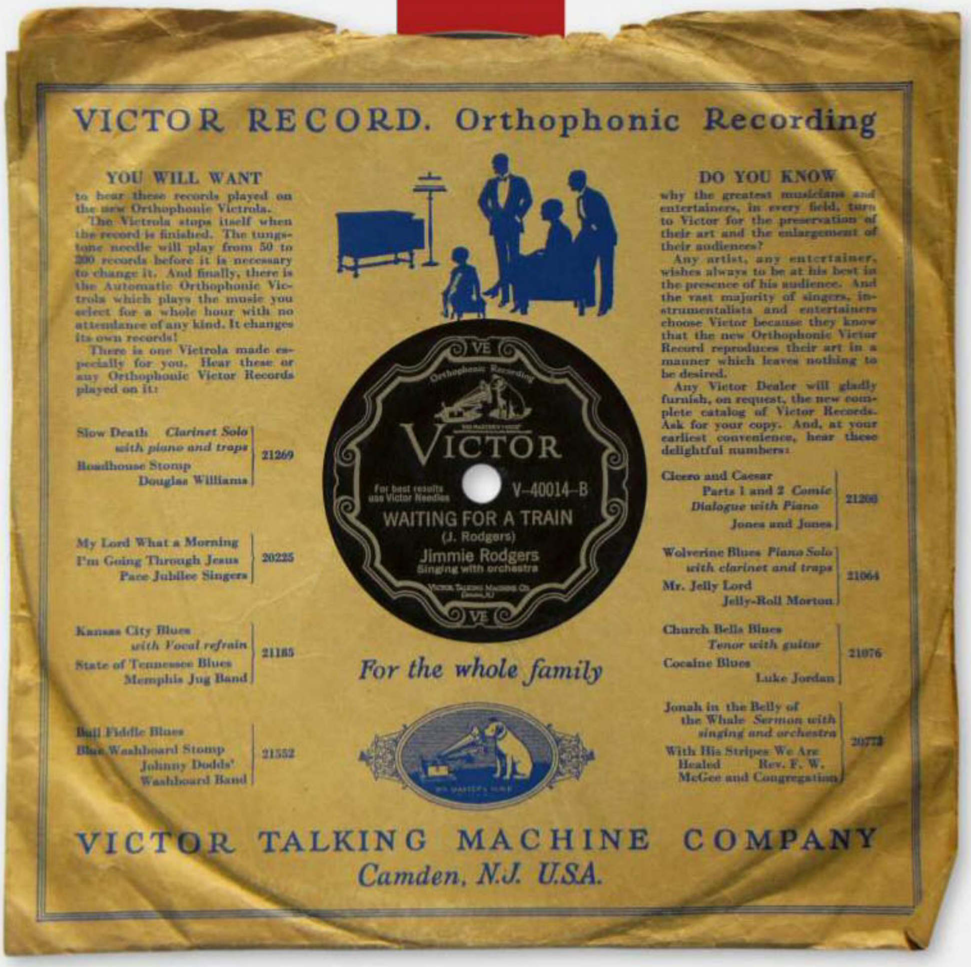
To me, it's a mark that no one else had reached before or since. He was there at the very beginning of radio and recording, the subject matter of the Dust Bowl and the Depression and all of that was the backdrop for his career. But now that has nothing to do with it, new people are introduced to his music every day and they're floored with it. There's a tribe of people that live in Africa, totally isolated from the world, and they have weddings and everything with Jimmie Rodgers' music goin'. He's got so much soul it's lasted for almost a hundred years!

When I did my tribute album [1969's *Same Train, A Different Time*], I tried to learn everything I could, and I'm still studying. I think when you write songs and you try to play guitar and you try to sing, boy, he is a good mentor. Should he be better known? You know, some things are too good for the general public, heh! It's like, you may know about them, but everybody doesn't appreciate a diamond. He's kind of like that. What is he expressing? Life. It's life to music. As long as there's music and people on the Earth, Jimmie Rodgers' legacy will continue to surprise and entertain people.

Ian Harrison

Hag's groove: country patriarch Merle salutes The Singing Brakeman.

"HE'S GOT SO MUCH SOUL IT'S LASTED FOR ALMOST A HUNDRED YEARS."



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Memphis Jug Band
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Bull Fiddle Blues
Blue Washboard Stomp
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Helsinki ain't a bad place to be: Jaakko Eino Kalevi works on his presence and texture.

MOJORISING

JAAKKO EINO KALEVI

Finnish ex-tram driver trades heavy rock for driving, soft-focus synth pop.

In a dimly lit corner of the bar at east London's Courtyard theatre, a saggy leather sofa is attempting to swallow Jaakko Savolainen whole. It's quite a feat considering that Savolainen, who performs as Jaakko Eino Kalevi (his forename and middle names), has the physique of an Olympic high jumper; wiry, long-levered and beanpole tall.

The 29-year-old, multi-instrumentalist, Berlin-based Finn is quiet and measured, but not diffident, and perhaps mildly surprised to find himself being fêted for his dreamy, lysergic synth pop LP *Jaakko Eino Kalevi*, his fourth. "I wanted to play around with the idea of it being a debut album," he explains softly. "If people like it, they'll discover that there is a lot of other stuff also. So it could be a nice surprise."

Like many young Finns who form groups, metal made his 11-year-old self pick up a guitar. He still sports the requisite corkscrew barnet for it, although his previous albums also reveal a love for experimental jazz, oddball disco and synth-laden AOR. They all maintain a foothold on *JEK* too, specifically the last-named. It's most apparent in the swirling, trippy, grooves that bubble under Double Talk and Mind Like Muscle. And, if you detect some of the haze that infected The War On Drugs' *Lost In The Dream* last year, that's because Savolainen mixed the record with its engineer, Nicolas Vernhes, in New York.

"I GET INSPIRED WHEN I DO THE LAUNDRY."

Allowing someone else to help interpret his music didn't come without its challenges. "Sometimes it was hard to talk about the music I wanted," Savolainen says. "But he [Vernhes] spiced it up, gave it some presence and texture. I think it was even dreamier before, but Nicolas made it more focused. And more punchy."

The results lay down a spongy base on which his mellifluous vocals – evocative of Bryan Ferry and Savolainen hero Scott Walker – sink into. Here, as so often, he is self-effacing. "It's really a new thing to see myself as a singer," he says. "The first 7-inch I did was mostly sounds – murrrrr, mooooo, errrrrr – then I started writing words which I just repeated and it grew from there. But now even I have to admit, I sing."

Meanwhile, it looks as if he can forget about returning to his old job driving trams. It was there, sat in his cab, that the solitude and space helped foment many musical ideas. So, with his Helsinki Transport Authority cap in mothballs, where does he seek inspiration now? "This is a stupid comparison," he says, "but I get the same feeling when I do the laundry. I can just relax, while at the same time something useful is happening. I get inspired while ironing."

Stephen Worthy

JAAKKO EINO KALEVI

FACT SHEET

- For fans of: Washed Out, Scott Walker, War On Drugs, Roxy Music, Todd Terje.
- Henri Lindström, who Jaakko first formed a band with in 1997 aged 11, is still his tour drummer today.
- Jaakko has just realised that while his English lyrics are always sung, his Finnish ones are only spoken word.

KEY TRACKS

- Popcorn Party
- No End
- Mind Like Muscle

ALSORISING

Former **Dirty Projectors** member **Angel Deradoorian** marries West Coast mellowness to fourth world psychedelia on her debut album as **DERADOORIAN** *The Expanding Flower Planet*. Lead track A Beautiful Woman rides a beat that **Can**'s **Jaki Liebezeit** would be proud of. "I grew up listening to **James Brown**, so rhythm feels really important to me," she says. An album of deep organic basslines, exotic Moog and Eastern-tinged melismata that recalls both **Björk** and **Elizabeth Fraser**, it's experimental without feeling inaccessible. Making it "was way more intense than I thought it would be," she says. "It was a major sifting through of unresolved shit." *Joe Banks*

"No one knows how to spell 'Hooton', we all hate tennis, and 'club' makes us seem really twee and indie," mulls **Ryan Murphy**, singer of snaggy but dulcet Cheshire slack-rockers **HOOTON TENNIS CLUB**. Nonetheless, their debut album *Highest Point In Cliff Town* is a gem. Recalling **Pavement**, **Teenage Fanclub** and **Real Estate**, it's packed with such glowing, loose-jointed sketches as singles Jasper and Kathleen Sat On The Arm Of Her Favourite Chair. Regarding their creative chemistry, Murphy reveals that the quartet see no difference between being friends and playing in a band, adding, "we just try and make things fun for ourselves." They could be onto something. *Ian Harrison*

Steve Gullick, Harley Weir

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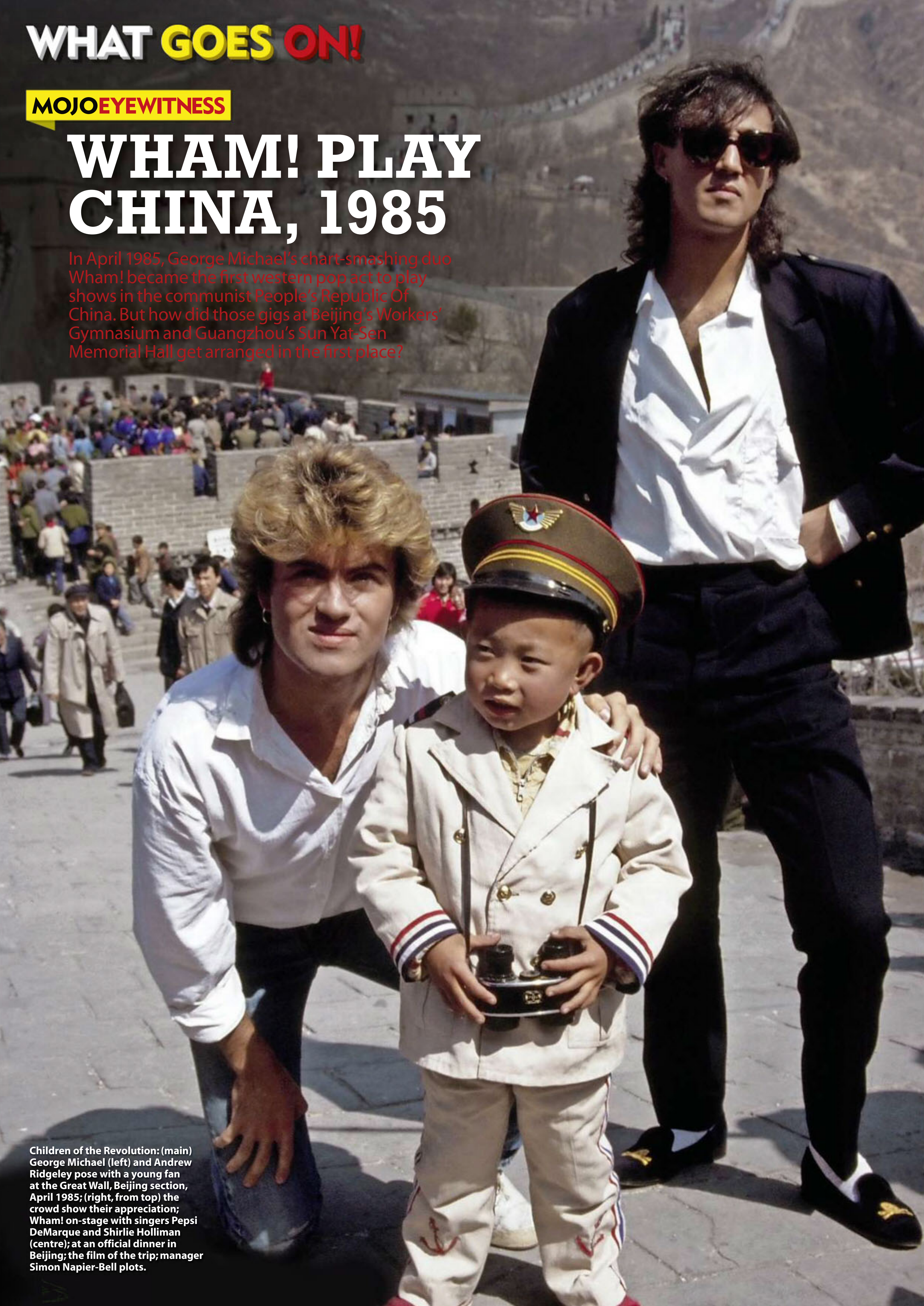
MOJO EYEWITNESS

WHAT! PLAY CHINA, 1985

In April 1985, George Michael's chart-smashing duo Wham! became the first western pop act to play shows in the communist People's Republic Of China. But how did those gigs at Beijing's Workers' Gymnasium and Guangzhou's Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Hall get arranged in the first place?



Children of the Revolution: (main) George Michael (left) and Andrew Ridgeley pose with a young fan at the Great Wall, Beijing section, April 1985; (right, from top) the crowd show their appreciation; Wham! on-stage with singers Pepsi DeMarque and Shirlie Holliman (centre); at an official dinner in Beijing; the film of the trip; manager Simon Napier-Bell plots.

ワム! イン・チャイナ
WHAM! IN CHINA
Foreign Skies

PART 1 "IT WAS FULL OF DANGER."

Manager Simon Napier-Bell on wooing China's apparatchiks, dealing with George Michael's ego and dodging CIA intrigue.

"Jazz Summers [co-manager] and I had dinner with George Michael and Andrew Ridgeley at the Bombay Brasserie [in mid-1983], and George said, 'If you want to manage us, your job is make us the biggest group in the world within a year.' Jazz said, 'Why don't Wham! become the first group to play in Communist China?' I got on a plane to Beijing the same week.

The challenge was to persuade the Chinese that letting a group play there would open up the country to huge investment. It was immaterial if they knew who the band were or not. But the problem was you couldn't even travel to China as a Westerner unless you were part of an official delegation – then on a flight to Japan I met a mysterious man called Professor Rolf, who said he had contacts within the Chinese government and could help me.

I spent the next 18 months having lunch with a succession of ministers in China. The whole thing was filled with intrigue and danger, you never knew who, if anyone, to trust. In the end I was in an official's office and [Chinese premier] Zhao Ziyang was on the other end of the phone and said, 'yes'. The practical difficulties were immense: the Chinese had absolutely nothing in the way of infrastructure to stage a large rock concert: we took a crew of around 50 people and had to hire a jumbo jet for the equipment alone. We had two experienced tour managers to coordinate the whole thing – Benny Collins, who worked with Michael Jackson, and Wham!'s own guy Jake Duncan.

The Chinese were very good at extracting money from us. They charged us for everything, including a 100-strong local crew who did nothing. We were asked if we needed – for a fee – 1,000 'fans' to greet us at the airport. I called up the head of CBS, Paul Russell, and said, We need a cheque for £500,000, and he called back and said we needed to make a film of the trip. I said, We'll need another half a million. It was all against Wham!'s future royalties, of course – and it was like, 'No problem.'

The tour was nuts! The day before we got there George had a meltdown in Hong Kong, he suddenly wasn't sure about it all. We took 10 or 15 journalists with us, and they were ordered not to write about it if they wanted to cross with us into China. Beijing was a great show, but I foolishly asked the support act, a breakdancer called Trevor, to go down into the audience and get them all going, which unsettled the secret police. They made an announcement that everyone should stay in their seats. Then Lindsay Anderson, who was directing the film [1986's Foreign Skies], wanted the house lights on to show the audience – but every time the Chinese thought the secret police were watching them and became subdued.

On an internal flight to a show in Canton the trumpeter went mad and cut himself with a penknife. The pilot went into a sudden 75 degree dive to upend him, and he was handcuffed and sedated. He was Portuguese, so it was really difficult to get the paperwork to get him into a mental hospital, but we did.

Because we were dealing with this insular regime, the CIA were on my back; they wanted to pay me to work for them, but not tell anyone, not even the tax man. I said, So you want me to break the law? No thanks. I got to know a lot of Chinese secret police, they were a lot more clever.

We succeeded in getting the attention of the world and so did the Chinese. We got the front page of Time, Newsweek, and within a month of coming home we were booking Wham! on a US stadium tour, when previously they were playing small theatres.

We were six months or so behind schedule when it came to George's demand to make Wham! the biggest band in the world. But we did manage it and it was the start of China becoming the modern country it is today."

"A BREAK-DANCER CALLED TREVOR UNSETTLED THE SECRET POLICE."

TURN OVER! TOUR MANAGER JAKE DUNCAN RECALLS STRESS, ETIQUETTE AND DETERMINATION…

Owen Franken/Corbis (2), Neal Preston/Corbis, Rex, Getty Images

WHAT GOES ON!

In Club Tropicana, everything's free: (above) Andrew Ridgeley waves the red flag; (right) Michael (left) and Ridgeley sport Chinese Army caps; (below left) meeting the local media; (below) the ever-present portrait of state founder Chairman Mao Wham ! saw on their trip.

PART 2 "WE PULLED IT OFF"

WHAM! PLAY CHINA, 1985

Wham! tour manager Jake Duncan on the strange experience of getting a PA to Beijing in one piece, canine cutlets and over-zealous local crew.

"The only person who had played in China before was Jean Michel Jarre [in 1981]. But if anyone could make it happen, Simon could. Beforehand, Simon took [the production heads] to dinner and said, 'This isn't going to be like any tour you've ever worked on. You'll need patience, politeness and understanding – we can't offend anybody.'

We took most of the equipment with us, and hired the lighting rig in Hong Kong. It was all flown out on a special 747. We trucked a lot of stuff [from Hong Kong to Beijing] or flew with the Chinese airline CAC, or 'kak' as we called it, which pretty much summed up the service. When we got there, we couldn't move around on our own. One day, we were taken to a food market, and Shirlie Holliman [of backing singers Pepsi & Shirlie] freaked out and said, 'I think that's a dog hanging up there.' The translator, keen not to offend us, said, 'If you don't like dog, we also have cat.'

There's an etiquette in China where you have to be painstakingly polite. You can't be direct with people and call them a tosser. The Chinese didn't want us to do any manual work; there were hundreds of local crew waiting to help us. It was difficult: electric equipment was being loaded onto open flatbed trucks in a country where it rains a fair bit. There's also certain ways to safely unload, say, a Marshall amplifier; if anything was broken, there was nowhere to get replacements. So when we finally set up the gear in Beijing, we breathed a huge sigh of relief when we heard the first 'one-two, one-two' coming over the PA.

Things were helped by George and Andrew, who were very professional – George had his eye on the ball all the time; Andrew liked a laugh but didn't miss a trick, either. If George dug his heels in about something, you could rely on Andrew to help him see it from another angle. But even the slightest change to the timetable disrupted everything. It was strange: we didn't know what to expect, and they didn't know what to expect either. No one had ever done anything like it before.

In the back of our minds we all knew if this doesn't go well, how will other groups ever do it? And we didn't want the people in China that helped us to lose their jobs. We pulled it off, but I can't say it wasn't stressful.

Two years later, I was involved in trying to get the Marlboro Country Music Festival to China. [Our delegation] spent a week being shunted from government office to office, waiting for two hours on wooden benches for nothing to happen. In the end we gave up, which showed just how good Simon was at setting the whole Wham! thing up.

I've been back to China in more recent times with Westlife. Beijing is all steel and glass now. It couldn't be more different than it was."

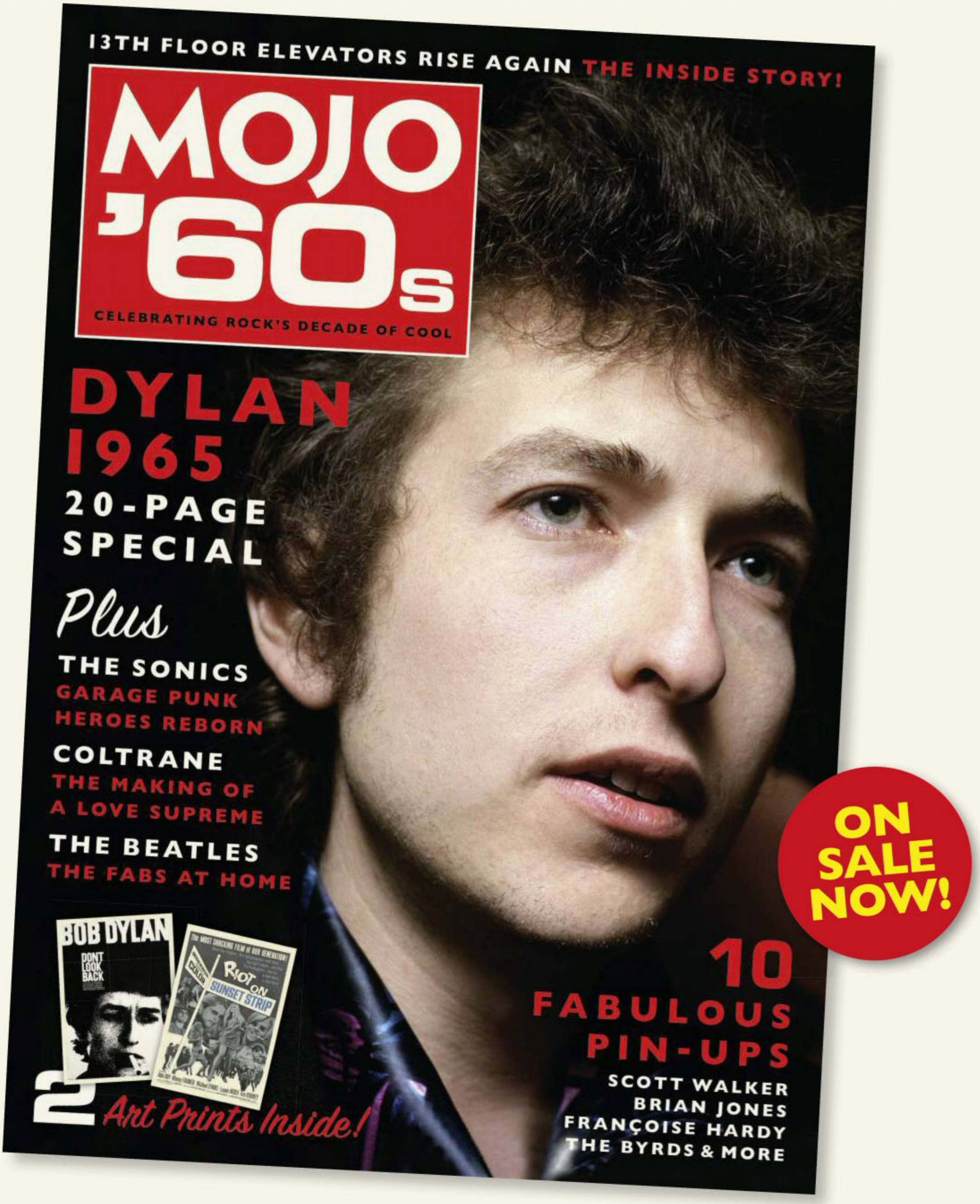
Pat Gilbert

Simon Napier-Bell's Ta-Ra-Ra-Boom-De-Ay (Unbound) is now out in paperback.

"WE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT, AND THEY DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT EITHER."

News Group Newspapers, Rex, Neal Preston/Corbis, Alamy

ROCK'S GREATEST DECADE...
NOW HAS ITS OWN MAGAZINE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THE LATE LATE SHOW
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Corden bleu: (main image) Palma Violets play The Late Late Show, Los Angeles, June 8, 2015 (from left) 'Chilli' Jesson, Will Doyle (hidden on drums), Sam Fryer, Pete Mayhew; (below) Palma fan Flavor Flav.

ON THE ROAD

PAINT IT LILAC

In San Diego and Los Angeles, Palma Violets play The Late Late Show, have a séance and crowd surf.

"Don't the Palma Violets look like a proper rock'n'roll band, eh, ladies and gentlemen?" asks an excited James Corden, erstwhile star and co-writer of BBC sitcom Gavin & Stacey. The audience on his new US chat show on CBS, The Late Late Show With…, chuckle along uncomprehendingly.

A month into its nightly midweek run, only one UK music artist has performed in the Jonathan Ross-style closing live-music slot, and that was teenies One Direction (other featured acts: Iggy Azalea and Mariah Carey). Also like Ross's programme, the host spends the opening minutes bantering with his guests backstage by video link.

Upon opening their dressing-room door, the roving cameraman finds the somewhat ragged-looking Violets sat on the floor, holding hands, in total darkness but for a couple of candles – a pose they've chaotically adopted just a few seconds earlier.

"We're having a séance," slurs Sam Fryer, Palma Violets' chief singer and songwriter, and Corden howls – a genuine laugh, unlike his forced titter when chatting with his unfunny American celebrity guests.

It's the south London quartet's last day in the US after five flat-out weeks touring coast-to-coast in a too-small splitter van. They're unshaven, mildly drunk, wearing the same clothes as when MOJO first rolled up for yesterday's gig in San Diego, and extra-bored, having sat around in CBS's vast studio since 9am. They do indeed look every inch a proper rock'n'roll band.

The band landed this prestigious telly slot when, at Bono's wife's birthday party, the U2's singer apparently raved to Corden that they were "the antidote to pop". Palma Violets, have this effect on people. Once seen in action, they're irresistible to any keeper of the Stones-Clash-Libertines unruly Brit-rock faith. Accordingly, the headlong, refusenik quality of these blood-and-tears, death-or-glory early-twenty-somethings landed them a Rough Trade deal with barely a half-dozen songs in the bag.

> "IF I REFUSED TO SMOKE WITH YOU, I'D HAVE TO HIT MYSELF IN THE FACE"
> **Flavor Flav**

Their debut, 2013's *180*, connected largely thanks to Best Of Friends, a rowdy, emotionally charged anthem – the first song their bassist/other singer, Alexander 'Chilli' Jesson, ever wrote. Written and recorded piecemeal as the band coalesced, *180* shot to Number 11 in the UK, its hints of Seeds-y organ-led garage and Richard Hawley-style reverb-drenched romance all welcome icing on the cake.

This year's *Danger In The Club* was more of a 'grower', the product of an odyssey of self-discovery in Wales and Henley, helmed by John Leckie, producer of such pivotal records as *The Stone Roses* and Radiohead's *The Bends*. Leckie, according to Fryer, "reached inside our minds, and went, 'Come out – just fucking do it, what have you got to be scared of?'"

He coaxed them to be more musical, to use more diverse heroes like The Gun Club and Nick Cave (whom Jesson's late father Rayner managed) as a launchpad, while keeping Fryer's lurching, impulsive songcraft intact.

"The way Sam thinks up songs is not your standard verse-chorus," says Chilli, grinning, "more like verse-verse-verse-outro, but all catchy. He's very off-the-cuff, whereas it takes me a long time, and I wear my heart on my sleeve."

The character contrast is clear halfway through *Danger…*, when Chilli's openly confessional Jacket Song (about his tryst with Alana from Haim, the sisterly LA rockers' very own 'Party Spice') lands straight after Sam's skewed Coming Over To My Place. Live, the yin/yang pair are fabulously kinetic. After nine hours cooped up at CBS, they explode into life to close Corden's show. Cranking out the sarky Girl, You Couldn't Do Much Better On The Beach at double-quick tempo,

Rattlesnake Highway
On the beach
English Tongue
Tom the Drum
We Found love
Mansder
Best of Friends
Step up
Danger
Johnny Bagga

Fryer sneers from behind shades and fedora, while Jesson bobs manically beside him, hollering. They rock the house so comprehensively, they get to encore a triumphantly rousing English Tongue, to Californian whoops of abandonment.

The odds Palma Violets overcome the day before are greater still, when they appear late-afternoon at San Diego's Sleep Train Amphitheatre for alt-radio station 91X's X-Fest. Sharing a bill with The Cult and Modest Mouse, they start playing facing the back curtain, and remain so until the beyond-Spinal Tap revolving stage presents them to their public. As nutty keysman Pete Mayhew, the first of the four rotated into view, notes afterwards, "It was like a game show – 'Tonight you can take home a keyboardist, or a guitarist…', and I was the first prize on offer, and not many people were bidding."

Out in the crowd, the Palmas' slam-dancing minister-without-portfolio Harry Violent generates enough interest for a circle pit, and gradually the band's irrepressible energy connects. The new album's Hispanic-tinged Matador wows a lively gang of bequiffed Morrissey enthusiasts up from Mexico, and by a ferally Damned-esque Johnny Bagga' Donuts, Jesson is surfing across an ecstatic crowd, the gaffer tape wrapped around his right boot trailing in people's faces.

If Palma Violets make new friends wherever they go, it's because they approach the whole game with the correct attitude.

"It's been thousands of miles," says a wide-eyed Chilli of their second zig-zagging passage across North America, "but it never matters, because there's always something new around the next corner."

According to eloquent drummer Will Doyle, their cravings for on-the-road experience have routinely been satisfied "by just saying 'yes'".

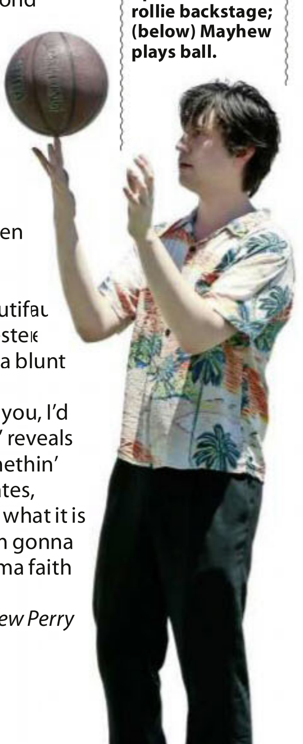
The proof of the maxim is revealed when, against a beautifu San Diego sunset, fellow X-Feste Flavor Flav arrives and shares a blunt with the band.

"If I refused to smoke with you, I'd have to hit myself in the face," reveals the rapper. "Maybe I'll do somethin' with you one day," he speculates, adding: "I don't know exactly what it is you motherfuckers do, but I'm gonna fuckin' do it anyway." The Palma faith has another recruit.

Andrew Perry

Piper Ferguson (10)

Mauvin' on up: (clockwise from top left) with TV host James Corden; live in San Diego; setlist; with Flavor Flav (Will Doyle, far left); Jesson smartens up; a medicinal rollie backstage; (below) Mayhew plays ball.



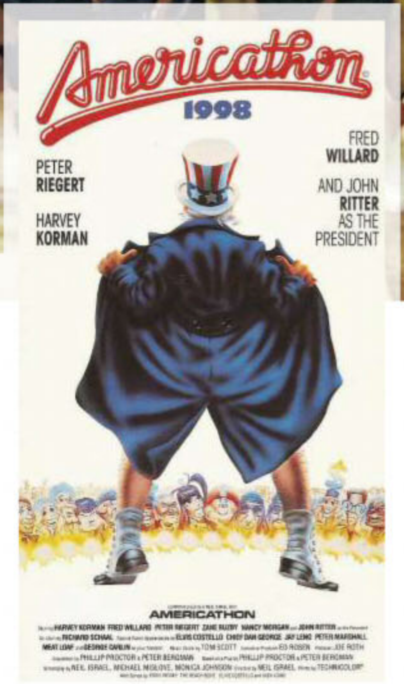
FROMAGEFREE

The Palmas balance mockery and anthems on second LP.

After touring their debut album for almost two years, the band realised some aspects of their songwriting had been too naïve and slavishly poppy for their own tastes. In their own internal vernacular, they have a word for such shortcomings: "cheese".

"We have a love-hate relationship with cheese," says Sam Fryer. "Best Of Friends and We Found Love [off 2013's *180*] were written upon cheese. Come Over To My Place on the new album? Big ball of cheese almost. You think it's going to go into this, (*shrieks à la Whitney Houston*) 'Iiii will alwaaaays loo-oove yoouu-oouu', but I couldn't let that happen. That's what we were trying to avoid this time. Instead it ends: 'I'd rather die than be in love.' What it comes down to is, we've always wanted to have a laugh with our music, to take the piss.

"But after we thought we'd finished the record, we wrote English Tongue. We knew it was an anthem, it just goes up and up and up, so we all agreed it would be good to have a real sing-along on there just stick it on the end. Like, 'Listen to [LP tracks] Peter And The Gun and No Money Honey first, *then* you get this ya bastards!'"



TIMEMACHINE

AUGUST 1979 ...COSTELLO, BEACH BOYS AND MEAT LOAF PLAY THE AMERICATHON

AUGUST 10 When the film Americathon premiered, its opening sequence featured a clip of President Jimmy Carter giving a speech about an energy crisis. Narrator George Carlin breaks in, saying, "When America finally ran out of gas, an angry mob broke into the White House and lynched him."

So began a zany, if prophetic, movie set in 1998. The opening song, It's A Beautiful Day, was sung by The Beach Boys, who, the audience is informed, have been at the top for 40 years. "Roller-skating, joggin' or fancy bike," they beamed, "you can get around most anyway you like." With sunshine-sharp harmonies, the lyrics looked to a time when the USA had no oil left, people lived in cars rather than drove them and bikes and roller skates were the only way to get around.

The film, bizarre beyond belief yet accurate in several of its predictions, was the idea of Phil Proctor and Peter Bergman of Los Angeles' experimental comedy ensemble (and Goon Show fans) The Firesign Theatre. Bergman had won his place in rock history by coining the term "love-in" in 1967, and ran the first such event in Los Angeles that year, when some 65,000 people turned up and turned on, and traffic blocked the freeways for miles.

Gary Usher, then a staff producer at Columbia Records, was impressed and offered The Firesign Theatre their first recording contract. Albums like *Don't Crush That Dwarf, Hand Me The Pliers* (1970) and *Not Insane* (1972) followed, and in 1978 their play Americathon became a stage show. Soon after, director Neal Israel set about turning Proctor and Bergman's satirical conceit into a fully-fledged cinematic offering, one boasting a cast that included John Ritter, Harvey Korman, Peter Riegert, Cybill Shepherd, Zane Buzby, Jay Leno and Meat Loaf.

Israel was on a high at the time, having just scripted Ringo Starr's 1978 TV Special, a programme that not only featured Ringo as himself plus his fictional brother Ognir Rrats but also George Harrison, Vincent Price, Carrie Fisher and Dr. John, plus music director Jimmy Webb.

But as far as Americathon was concerned, things didn't quite work out. Proctor and Bergman soon bowed out, leaving other screenwriters to reshape much of their original plot. A plot, such as it was, which involved the US President, having sold off the White House and living in a condo named

Corn in the USA: (clockwise from main) TV host Monte Rushmore (Harvey Korman, centre) dances patriotically with friends; the movie poster; Meat Loaf as Roy Budnitz; hilarity with nuns; Elvis Costello plays as the Earl of Manchester.

"IT WAS SO TERRIBLE I HAD TO LEAVE THE IEATRE."
Jay Leno

The Western White House, running a non-stop 30-day telethon to pay $400 billion and stave off foreclosure by billionaire Sam Birdwater (played by Chief Dan George) who's in control of the National Indian Knitting Enterprise, otherwise known as NIKE.

Among the acts signed to save America were Oklahoma Daredevil Roy Budnitz (Meat Loaf), who bravely jousts with the last working car in the land. For his part, Larry 'Poopy Butt' Miller (Jay Leno) fights his own mother in the boxing ring, while by satellite from 'Limeyland', where 10 Downing Street has become Thatcher's Disco, there's a sequence featuring the Earl of Manchester (Elvis Costello) singing Crawling To America to small crowd.

When the dust settled, Columbia released a soundtrack LP featuring The Beach Boys, Costello, Nick Lowe, Eddie Money and musical director Tom Scott. But few boasted about their participation. Jay Leno later told the Boston Globe: "It was so terrible I had to leave the theatre," while John Ritter told Hollywood columnist Marilyn Beck: "When I saw it, I remember smiling during the opening credits, then the smile faded and pretty soon my mouth was down to my chin."

The critics also pilloried the wayward project, the late Roger Ebert advising, "If you plan to miss this movie, better miss it quickly; I doubt if it'll be around to miss for long."

So spare a thought for a film whose main characters eventually patch up their differences and move to Vietnam to create a religion based on the songs of Donna Summer – and which, it must be remembered, forecast China becoming a capitalistic global force, the US tottering on the edge of bankruptcy, and Nike becoming an international conglomerate. A glass should also be raised to one Ted Coombs, who roller-skated across the whole USA and back to promote the movie and gain a place in the Guinness Book Of Records.

Fred Dellar

AD ARCHIVE 1979

The Boomtown Rats Wear Kickers

Bob Geldof's The Boomtown Rats wear Kickers, you say? Set off a white pair with striped pyjamas, worn *in the street*!

Alamy (3), Photofest (3), Getty Images, Corbis, Rex

ALSO THIS MONTH

NO SMALL FEAT

4 At the LA Forum, over 20,000 people attend a benefit for the widow of **Little Feat** singer/guitarist **Lowell George**. **Jackson Browne**, **Linda Ronstadt** (above) **Bonnie Raitt**, **Emmylou Harris**, **Michael MacDonald** and **Nicolette Larson** plus the remaining members of Little Feat perform.

BREAD KLEIN

9 **Allen Klein** receives a two month jail sentence and a $5,000 fine for filing false income returns while he was managing **The Beatles**.

WHO'S THERE?

16 Shadow Records release *The* ***Elvis Presley*** *Séance Album*. Recorded at a séance on the second anniversary of the singer's death, the sleevenote promises, "You will hear all the questions and answers from the spirit world of Elvis."

BOOTS OFF

18 Boots The Chemist chain ban Polydor salesmen from their 250 record departments, due to a proposed reduction of profit margin from 33.33 per cent to 30 per cent.

ROCKER DIES

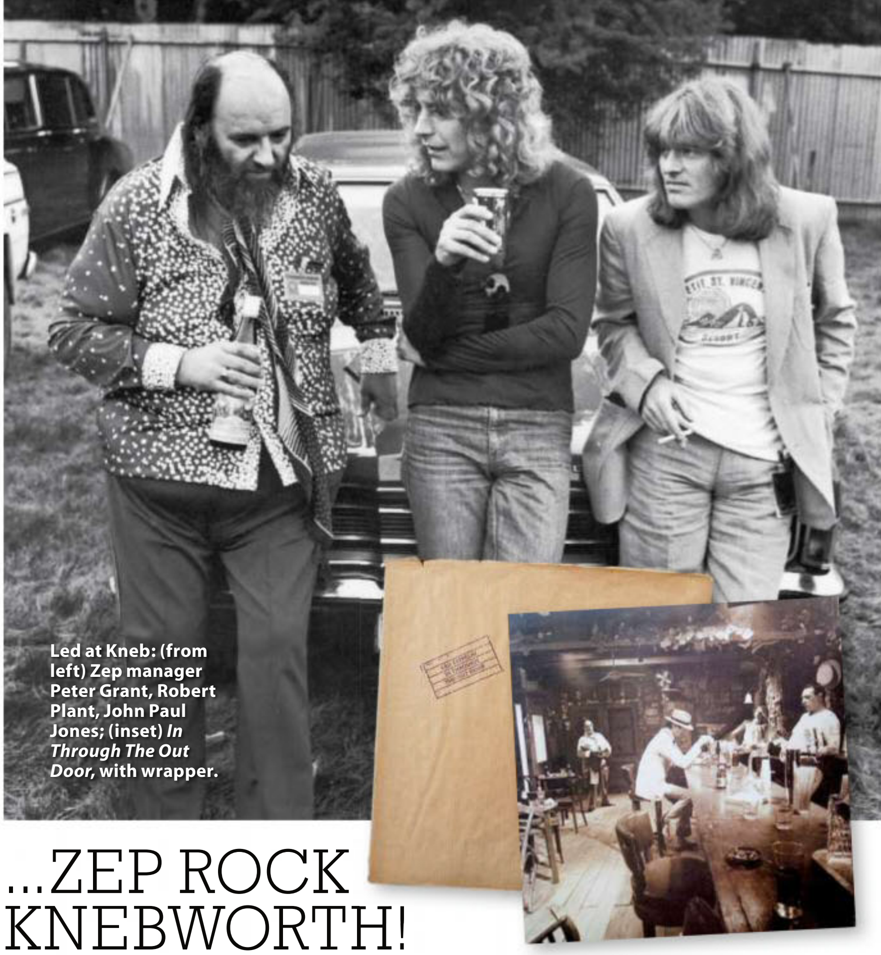
19 **Dorsey Burnette**, bassist in brother Johnny's seminal rockabilly band The Rock'n'Roll Trio, dies from a heart attack at the age of 46.

ITAL STATISTICS

23 Brooklyn celebrates **Peter Tosh** Day and awards the reggae star an honorary citation when he visits the area's Jamaican neighbourhoods.

KENTON CHECKS OUT

25 **Stan Kenton**, the big-band leader who popularised progressive jazz, dies at the age of 67. Forthright in his opinions, he hated country music and labelled the genre, "an insult to anyone's intelligence".



Led at Kneb: (from left) Zep manager Peter Grant, Robert Plant, John Paul Jones; (inset) *In Through The Out Door*, with wrapper.

...ZEP ROCK KNEBWORTH!

AUGUST 11 **Led Zeppelin play the second of two gigs at Knebworth. Among the supports are The New Barbarians – whose line-up includes Keith Richards, Ron Wood, Ian McLagan, Zigaboo Modeliste and Bobby Keys – plus Todd Rundgren's Utopia and Chas & Dave. The shows publicise Zep's latest album, *In Through The Out Door*, which was recorded at Abba's studio in Sweden. One report claims Abba actually feature on the record, but a Zep spokesman retorts, "Abba do not appear on the album – not unless they crept in afterwards and added some overdubs to the tapes."**

Betcha bye Polly wow: X-Ray Spex leave home.

...X-RAY SPEX CALL TIME

AUGUST 11 Offbeat punks X-Ray Spex call it a day. Members Jak Airport and B.P. Hurding explain: "The band did less and less live gigs and the fans kept asking when we were going on the road again – and now that Poly [Styrene]'s involved in her solo thing… well, that's it." Airport and Stafford have already formed Classix Nouveaux, who play their first gig two weeks later with glabrous frontman Sal Solo, who initially thought he was auditioning to be X-Ray Spex's new singer.

TOPTEN

US DISCO SINGLES AUGUST 18

1 **HERE COMES THAT SOUND AGAIN** LOVE DELUXE ATLANTIC

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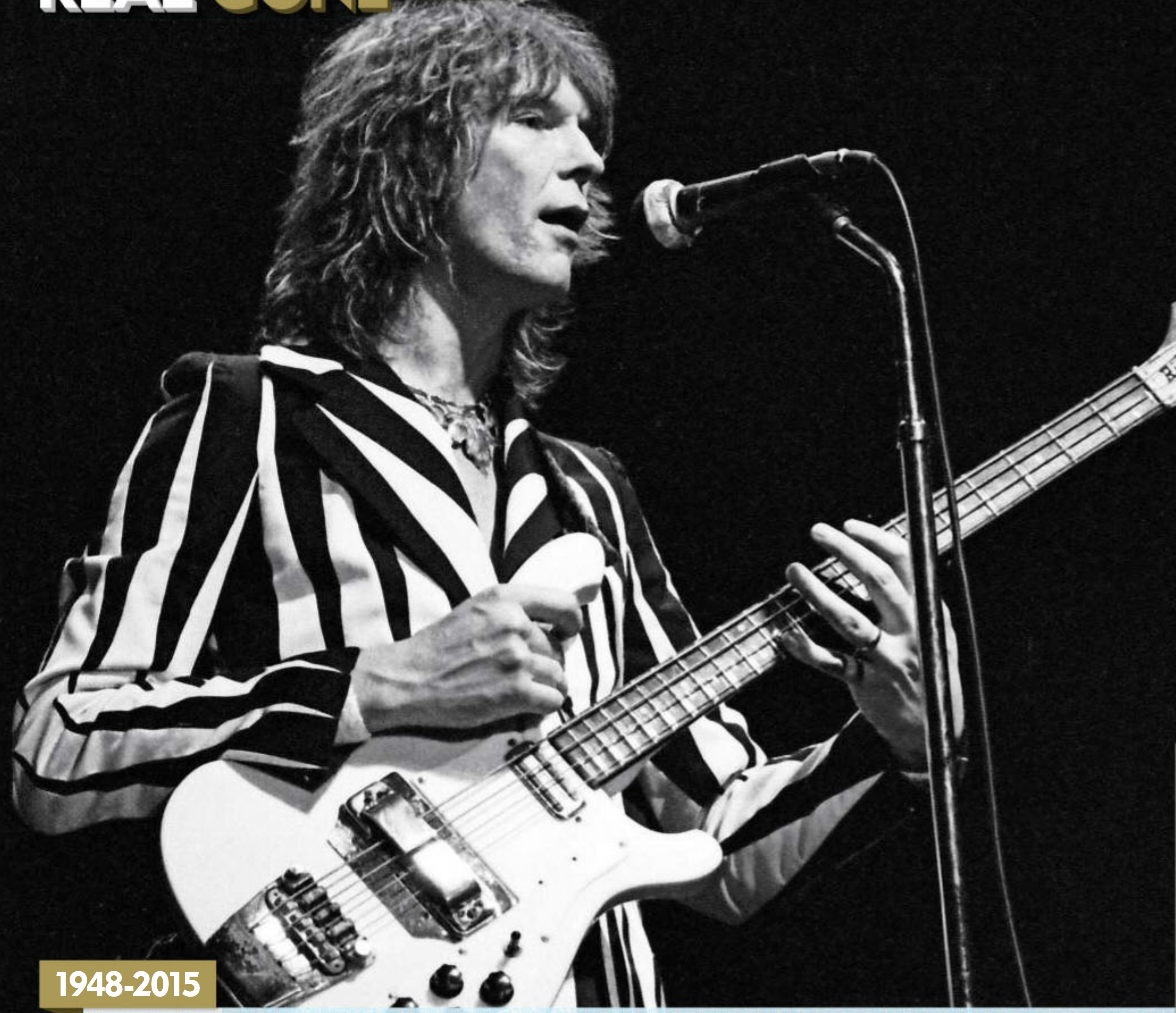


Affirmative action: Chris Squire wearing one of his two 'backgammon' suits, on-stage with Yes, 1977.

1948-2015

THE SOUND CHASER

Yes bassist Chris Squire lost his fight against leukaemia on June 27.

"He always said he was Darth Vader to my Obi-Wan," wrote singer Jon Anderson on the passing of his Yes co-founder Chris Squire. "I always thought of him as Christopher Robin to my Winnie The Pooh."

Anderson's whimsical description of his former bandmate was designed to illustrate the bass player's humour, but it also helped highlight the 67-year-old's focus and determination. Indeed, for over 45 years Squire was the sole constant in Yes's ever-evolving line-up. His aggressive, percussive bass playing and talent as a singer and composer helped define the band's expansive and often dense sound, influencing several generations of musicians in the process.

So often derided by critics in search of the next hip thing, Yes took on the libertarian principles of psychedelia, married them to deeply harmonic structures alongside individual virtuoso performances, and created their unique sound.

Born on March 4, 1948, in London, Squire played in R&B outfit The Selfs and then psych combo The Syn before forming Yes with Anderson in 1968. His musical vision would lie at the very heart of Yes's approach, drawing as it did on his early love of jazz as well as The Beatles' pop smarts, and the melodic impact of Simon & Garfunkel, The 5th Dimension and the choral music he'd sung in his youth. His hyperactive playing style – which placed him firmly in the lineage of John Entwistle and Jack Bruce – is evident across Yes's 21 studio albums, all featuring Squire.

His creative chemistry with Anderson and then guitarist Steve Howe was palpable, and his bass work on a hot streak of landmark albums – *The Yes Album*, *Fragile* (both 1971), *Close To The Edge* (1972), the double *Tales From Topographic Oceans* (1973) and *Relayer* (1974) – helped transform Yes into one of the biggest, most flamboyant bands on the planet.

Squire's only solo album, *Fish Out Of Water*, emerged in 1975 and hit the UK Top 30, but Yes remained his priority throughout his life. Latterly in 2012, he also recorded the acclaimed album *A Life Within A Day*, with ex-Genesis guitarist Steve Hackett under the name of Squackett.

Diagnosed with acute erythroid leukaemia in May this year, he withdrew reluctantly from touring with Yes and his death on June 27 at his home in Phoenix, Arizona, was confirmed by keyboard player, friend and bandmate Geoff Downes on his Twitter page the following day.

"Utterly devastated beyond words to have to report the sad news of the passing of my dear friend, bandmate and inspiration Chris Squire," wrote Downes, who joined Yes along with Buggles bandmate Trevor Horn for their controversial 1980 album, *Drama*.

Yes themselves issued their own statement via their Facebook page, lauding the bassist as "the band's linchpin and, in so many ways, the glue that held it together over all these years" while crediting him with "having written and co-written much of Yes's most endearing music."

Steve Hackett also eulogised Squire as "a huge talent who defined a genre".

Phil Alexander

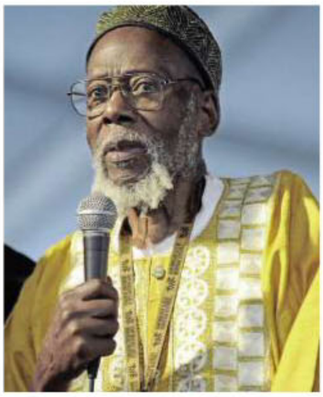
"CHRIS WAS THE BAND'S LINCHPIN AND, IN SO MANY WAYS, THE GLUE THAT HELD IT TOGETHER OVER ALL THESE YEARS."

THE LEGACY

The Album: Yes *Fragile* (Atlantic, 1972)

The Sound: Squire's driving four-string technique is evident on his most celebrated tracks, which include the dazzling Roundabout and his popular bass showcase The Fish (Schindleria Praematurus), both from *Fragile*, as well as the brain-scrambling The Gates Of Delirium (from *Relayer*, sections of which were recorded at Squire's home studio).

Bob Riha Jr/Getty Images, Alamy, Pa, Rex, Getty Images



HAROLD BATTISTE

ARRANGER, SESSION-MAN, EDUCATOR

BORN 1931

Raised just down the road from the Dew Drop Inn, New Orleans music was part of Harold Battiste's life from its start. But he was no street musician. After graduating in music education from Dillard University, the teacher turned session man, producer, composer and label-owner when he set up AFO (All For One) records in response to white bosses' exploitation of black musicians. Its biggest early hit was Barbara George's spirited US R&B Number 1 I Know (You Don't Love Me No More) in 1961. Three years later Battiste followed a familiar path for New Orleans musicians to Los Angeles where he became a key contributor to Sam Cooke's pop smashes, arranging You Send Me and playing piano on the pivotal A Change Is Gonna Come. Alerted to Battiste's multitalented work, Sonny Bono had him arrange many Sonny & Cher hits – that's his soprano sax on 1965's worldwide Number 1 I Got You Babe – and he became MD on their TV show. In 1967, he began recording Dr. John, developing 1968's psych-voodoo classic *Gris-Gris*, its successor *Babylon*, and, after a rift, 1972's *Gumbo*. After a session career, he returned to the University of New Orleans in 1989, and although a 1993 stroke limited his playing, he continued to teach and arrange. Battiste died on June 19 after a long illness.

Geoff Brown

VAL DOONICAN

THE BIG EASY

BORN 1927

Relaxed light entertainer Val Doonican hosted his own BBC television programme from 1965 to 1986, when his knitwear-clad, family-friendly blend of easy listening, country and novelty songs drew huge audiences. The Waterford-born singer, who began his career in 1947, enjoyed his greatest chart success between 1964 and 1969, scoring eight Top 30 singles (including Walk Tall, What Would I Be and a cover of Bob Lind's Elusive Butterfly, a Number 5 hit in April 1966) and five Top 10 albums: the aptly-titled *Val Doonican Rocks, But Gently* – he sang the closing numbers of his TV show from a rocking chair – succeeded The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper* at Number 1. Not quite the square of perception, in 1967 he made a cameo appearance on The Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band's song The Intro And The Outro alongside Eric Clapton. A keen golfer and painter, he retired from performing in 2009.

Ian Harrison

The Special Years: easygoing Val Doonican.

THEY ALSO SERVED

BOMBAY MUSICIAN **CHARANJIT SINGH** (b.1940) may have been known only to scholars of Bollywood film music had his 1982 album *Synthesizing: 10 Ragas To A Disco Beat* not been rediscovered in the early noughties. Entirely independent of developments in North America, his exploration of the Roland TR-808 drum machine and TB-303 bassline generator, plus a Jupiter 8 synth, led him to create a startling early variant of acid house, albeit one based on Indian classical music. At the time of his death, he was planning live dates in the UK and the US.

MANCHESTER MUSIC man **STUART 'JAMMER' JAMES** was in-house producer/ engineer for the New Hormones label, overseeing early '80s recordings by **Ludus**, **Dislocation Dance**, **The Diagram Brothers** and **Eric Random**, in whose group **The Bedlamites** he played synthesizer. His other credits include **Joy Division**'s 1979 Piccadilly Radio session, and later recordings with **A Certain Ratio**, **Swing Out Sister** and **The Durutti Column**. He was also tour manager for **The Smiths**, A Certain Ratio and, for 20 years, **The Chemical Brothers**, who said in a statement, "He will be missed by so many. You could always rely on Jammer."

FILM COMPOSER **JAMES HORNER** (b.1953) won two Oscars for his score for the 1997 mega-grosser Titanic, one of the highest selling screen soundtracks in chart history. After teaching music theory at UCLA, he began his movie career in 1979: his 100-plus works would range from Field Of Dreams and Avatar to Braveheart and Honey, I Shrunk The Kids. He died when his aircraft crashed in southern California.

NASHVILLE songwriter **RED LANE** (b.1939) was born Hollis DeLaughter in Louisiana, but devised his alias when he needed to moonlight from his dayjob in the US Air Force. After early connections with **Buck Owens**, **Waylon Jennings** and **Justin Tubbs**, his 50-year career in the Music City yielded hits for **Tammy Wynette**, **Willie Nelson** and **Merle Haggard**, who frequently recorded Lane's songs. Inducted into the Nashville Songwriters' Hall of Fame in 1993, Lane enjoyed skydiving and lived in a converted 1958 DC-8 passenger jetliner.

DRUMMER **BRUCE ROWLAND** (b.1941) played with **Fairport Convention** from 1975 to 1979, after first contributing to 1972 recordings. He had previously played Woodstock as a member of **Joe Cocker's Grease Band**, had tutored the young **Phil Collins** in the art of drumming, and recorded with the likes of **Ronnie Lane**, **Wynder K. Frog** and **Jackie Lomax**, and played on the original recording of Jesus Christ Superstar. In later years he ran an ecological paint shop in Brixham, where Rowland succumbed to cancer.

LOUISIANA SINGER, drummer and bandleader **CAMILLE BOB** (b.1937) led swamp pop/ R&B outfit **Lil' Bob And The Lollipops** from the mid '50s. In 1965 Bob, who escaped life as a sharecropper when he swapped his horse for a drumkit, cut boozy party tune I Got Loaded – later covered by **Los Lobos** and **Robert Cray** – and My Heart's On Fire, the latter prized in Northern soul circles. In the '60s he hosted his own local TV show: he was inducted into the Louisiana Hall of Fame in 1990.

DESIGNER **PAUL BACON** (b.1923) created the sleeves for releases by **Sidney Bechet**, **Fats Waller**, **Thelonious Monk** and many others, for Blue Note and Riverside from the '40s onwards. He also sang and played comb, appeared in tributes to **Jelly Roll Morton**, recorded for the Jazzology label and designed Bad Brains' '80s logo. His distinctive book cover design credits include the first editions of Catch-22, One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest, Slaughterhouse-Five and Portnoy's Complaint.

GUITARIST, pianist and singer **WENDELL HOLMES** (b.c.1944) played blues, soul and country with his bassist brother Sherman and drummer 'Popsy' Dixon as **The Holmes Brothers**. Jobbing musicians since the early '60s, the Virginia-born trio convened as a group in 1979, recorded 11 albums, and shared stages and studios with **Van Morrison**, **Peter Gabriel** and more. In 2014 they received a National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship.

JAZZ SINGER **MONICA LEWIS** (b.1922) worked in radio and at New York's Stork Club before replacing **Peggy Lee** in **The Benny Goodman Orchestra**. Hailed as 'America's Singing Sweetheart', from 1947 she was the voice of Miss Chiquita Banana, cartoon mascot for the food group of the same name. She later appeared in films, and in her 2011 memoir Hollywood Through My Eyes, recalled turning down future US President Ronald Reagan's proposal of marriage.

ACTOR **SIR CHRISTOPHER LEE** (b.1922) enjoyed a long and successful career on screen. But he also recorded widely as a vocalist. Among his credits were singing The Tinker Of Rye on the soundtrack of 1973 horror classic The Wicker Man, 1989's euro-NRG duet with **Kathy Joe Daylor**, Little Witch, and invading the world of heavy metal with albums such as *Metal Knight*, *A Heavy Metal Christmas* and two concept works based on the life of the Emperor Charlemagne.

Clive Prior

Singing Sweetheart, Monica Lewis.

THE MOJO INTERVIEW

He defined Joy Division's **icy landscapes** and New Order's **forlorn euphoria**. Now, with **new band line-up** and new album, comes a **fresh candour**. "I was a **soft kid**," says Bernard Sumner, "but I developed a **hardened shell**."

Interview by **ANDREW MALE** • Portrait by **ANDREW COTTERILL**

BERNARD SUMNER HAS A HEADACHE. SAT in the corner of a stifling crooked-floored study on the third floor of Soho's defiantly shabby Union Club, dressed all in black, and balled up on an overstuffed pink armchair, the New Order vocalist and former Joy Division guitarist politely asks MOJO if he can wear his sunglasses during the interview and whether the window onto a bustling Greek Street can be left open. The reasons are seemingly two-fold. Firstly, we're at the end of a long day of press interviews to promote *Music Complete*, the first New Order album in 10 years. In direct contrast to New Order's businesslike last LP, 2005's *Waiting For The Sirens' Call*, and the straight-ahead guitar-rock of his sabbatical project, Bad Lieutenant, *Music Complete* is an audaciously eclectic and electronic affair that sees the welcome return of original member Gillian Gilbert, and enlists the help of such devoted fans, heroes and fellow travellers as Brandon Flowers, Iggy Pop, Richard X, La Roux's Elly Jackson and The Chemical Brothers' Tom Rowlands to collaborate on a set that reconnects with the happy-sad euphoric uplift of such classic '80s New Order albums as *Brotherhood* and *Technique*.

Nonetheless, it's been a long process. MOJO praises one particular new track, Tutti Frutti – a grand piano-house yacht-disco festivity that features an Italian lothario intoning the title, much in the manner of the "luurve technique" character on 1989's Fine Time – telling Sumner that the album sounds like "a weight has lifted". He begs to differ. "It was really hard work," he stresses, in that sardonic Salford drawl that somehow seems to mask its actual purpose. "We had a hard deadline. After Christmas it was 50-hour weeks and 70-hour weeks. We'd been touring on-off for about three and a half years, writing when we came home. I didn't get on with it to be honest."

WE'RE NOT WORTHY

"There's no rock star ego," says **Neil Tennant**.

Alamy

"When Blue Monday appeared I loved it and also felt a bit depressed as it was so similar to what Chris and I were trying to do in our early PSB demos. Bernard's voice has a boyish naivety with no rock star ego. He also has a great sparring sense of humour but is very considerate. He's very funny."

Another possible reason for Sumner's initial weariness is that *Music Complete* is the first New Order studio LP to be released without Peter Hook on bass. Hook left in 2007 after announcing the group had split following a fractious South American tour, and while Sumner feels he's said all there was to say about Hook's departure in a 2014 autobiography, Chapter And Verse, he has already spent the morning dodging questions from music journalists keen to reawaken ancient rivalries. However, as the hot afternoon cools and unfolds, Sumner's wariness gives way to something more resembling wry deliberation, and he opens up in a way that is both surprising and moving, willing to revisit such emotional and still-painful subjects as his tough Salford childhood, the death of Joy Division lead singer Ian Curtis, and the collapse of Tony Wilson's Factory Records and the Haçienda ➢

≺ nightclub, distant memories of a people and a city that are simultaneously bittersweet, moving but also dryly funny. "Manchester's a bit more generic as a city now," he says, "but I still like it. To be completely honest, I kind of like it more now. Not grim and miserable. I like having a nice glass of white wine and sushi in Selfridges."

Reading last year's autobiography was a revelation, as I'd always had you down as a very private person. Did writing it have any effect on your lyric writing? Did you feel like you'd opened up?

No. The book and the lyric writing were two separate entities. It was difficult trying to do both at the same time. I finished the book in May 2014, promoted it, did a tour of America and finished writing the album, so it's been a train of non-stop work. I decided to write the book because I felt I was at the right age to put my life in print. I think it addressed a lot of subjects that journalists wouldn't ask, a lot of private personal stuff.

Especially the details about your family. You never knew your father. Your mother Laura had cerebral palsy. You were raised by your grandparents…

It was difficult to put stuff about my mum down on paper but it helped me understand her. It wasn't a form of therapy though. I didn't feel any better after writing the book but I perhaps understood my mother more, and other people in the book, why they behaved a particular way.

You talk about it not being a very musical household. Where do you think your mum's decision to buy you an electric guitar came from? It seems such an incongruous detail.

I can't remember. I must have asked her, but I can't remember. With me it was… not interested in music, not interested in music. We just used to play football, go see Manchester United and throw bricks at each other. What kids do in Salford. Then all of a sudden, right about the age of 15 or 16… Music! It hit me like a switch coming on. The first thing was watching spaghetti westerns, the music of Ennio Morricone. I was more visual than auditory and quite good at art. But when you saw [Sergio] Leone's films, that mix of visuals and music seduced me. I know I asked for a record player. "I've heard this music and I want to hear more of it." So my mum bought me a little Dansette and I went out and bought the *A Fistful Of Dollars/For A Few Dollars More* LP. And when I went to Salford Grammar there was a real culture of kids talking about music, playing music, and I wanted to be part of that gang. And the youth club I went to, North Salford Youth Club, they had two rooms, one downstairs where they played soul music and ska and one upstairs you could bring albums to. They played the Stones, Free, Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac. So you had that dual influence of going from one room to another.

You met Hooky at Salford Grammar at the age of 11. Given the autobiography was written in the wake of your fallout with him, were there stories about your childhood friendship you chose to leave out?

(*Long pause*) How friendly do you think we were? That's an assumption. One a lot of people make. He was one of a number of friends. (*Longer pause*) That wasn't what the book was about. The book wasn't about my friendship with Peter Hook. I think I've said everything I need to say about him in the book.

Well, I don't suppose everyone who's reading this has read the book.

OK. What do you want to know about him, then? Are you saying that because we've fallen out, did I avoid writing about our relationship in the book? I think I do write about our early relationship in the book. Let's just say that the fond memories aren't so fond any more. That's kind of what you're getting at, isn't it? Well, yeah, you're right. When someone's called you a cunt and a twat it tends to affect the way you… you don't look at the past through rose-tinted spectacles any more. It does affect the way you think about something, yeah.

Is it a freeing experience to no longer have Hooky in the band? Did losing that bass sound feel like a…

A liberating experience? Erm, (*long pause*). I'd better be careful of what I say here, hadn't I? Erm, yeah, it did, to a certain extent. I'll have to be honest and say… it was… the road was suddenly wider. Yeah. Not that I'm denigrating anything that we've done with Hooky and his contributions in the past towards Joy Division and New Order. Obviously, it was brilliant, but on the other hand it was kind of liberating to be able to do what you want, without… Yeah. I don't really want to go on about it, though. It was seven years ago, actually, when he left the band and we've moved on and this new album is the result of us moving on.

What lessons did you take away from your childhood?

Self-reliance. Everyone I knew were dying or disabled. My grandmother was blind, my grandfather had a brain tumour, my mother had cerebral palsy, so I had to be quite self-reliant. The family unit did still work and I think my mother may have had depression. It might have been a by-product of the situation she found herself in. Maybe she had that piled on top of the problems she had with cerebral palsy. I don't know. You didn't have depression in those days. You just had grumpiness: "Stop being so miserable. Stop being in a mood." And no one understood the reasons why. But, I guess it made me a bit harder. The other thing you got when you were a kid was, "Stop being so soft." And you thought, "They're right, I am being soft." And living in Salford toughened

A LIFE IN PICTURES

The Sumner's tale: on Bernard's beat

1 Sumner shine: Bernard on a beach in North Wales in the '60s with his mother Laura, stepfather Jimmy Dickin and grandmother, also Laura.

2 Joy Division, Stockport, July 1979 (from left) Stephen Morris, Ian Curtis, Peter Hook, Sumner making his point.

3 Blue Mondays: New Order Mk1 on Top Of The Pops, 1983 (from left) Gillian Gilbert, Sumner, Hook, Morris.

4 With Hook in France, late '80s: "The fond memories aren't so fond any more."

5 Set free, plugged in: with Smiths escapee Johnny Marr as Electronic. "I'd never say no to working with him again. There are no bad vibes."

6 Get ready! The recently revived New Order: (from left) Tom Chapman, Gilbert, Sumner, Morris and Phil Cunningham. "Anything goes, really," says Bernard, "no rules."

7 New dawn: on-stage with Joy Division at De Lantaren, Rotterdam, January 16, 1980. "It didn't really feel like there was anything extra-special about us."

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Nick Wilson, BBC Photo Library, Photoshot (3), Getty Images, Chapter And Verse: New Order, Joy Division And Me by Bernard Sumner (Black Swan) is out now

you up. It was a tough place to grow up in. There was the possibility of being physically attacked. Quite often. It makes you a bit hardened. I was a soft little kid, but I developed a hardened shell because of events around me. My mother dying. I didn't stay the same person. It did change me. Not to mention the fact that my community was taken away by the city council. They destroyed the neighbourhood. That was a big thing. When the city authorities decided to pull it down and stick everyone in tower blocks they destroyed the community and when it went I felt a bit lost.

Did you look for that community in other places, in bands, in Factory, in acid house…

I don't think I've been searching for it, but I miss it, and I still dream about the street I lived on when I was a kid. The band is a community, but it's a different thing from what was in Salford. I never regained that. I don't think it exists any more.

How was it revisiting your memories of Joy Division and Ian for the autobiography?

When you're writing about Joy Division it's difficult to know what people would be interested in. Trainspotterish types might want to know that Ian introduced me to char siu bao, the pork-filled buns, which he knew how to say in Cantonese. I don't know… It didn't really feel like there was anything extra-special about Joy Division. What was *different* about us was that we really didn't know what we were doing. We didn't know how to write songs, therefore we wrote songs in different ways. Most bands learned by copying other bands' records. We couldn't. It was too hard. So we learned to play by not being able to play. And our attitude. Ian wanted everything to be extreme and manic. Intense. That was the script on the board when you went into the rehearsal room. That intensity came from Ian's desire for it to be so and we thought, OK, well, we can deliver that, easily, because of the place we'd grown up in. Those barren industrial surroundings, rainy Sundays with nothing happening, the grimness of it all, did shape the music in some way.

The amount of detail that goes into your account of the day Ian died is heartbreaking. It suggests you've revisited that day so many times…

Well, I think that day sort of imprinted itself fairly strongly on my mind. It's funny when something happens like that. Well, it's not funny when something happens like that. But the details, the minor details, are imprinted on your mind. Because it's such a shock. It was a shock, that day, to find out about Ian, and, I guess for quite a long time you play it over and over again in your head, like a movie scene. It tends to stay with you.

> "Manchester city authorities **destroyed** our **community**. I miss it. I **never regained** that."

You don't specifically address the emotions of that day, but they're in the tiny details…

Yeah… I'm not the sort of person who wears my emotions on my sleeve. It's where I grew up. If you showed a bit of emotion, that was it; it was a weakness.

You later suffered from depression yourself. Did it cause you to readdress, re-evaluate your mum's life and Ian's life in the context?

Yeah. If you suffer from depression you behave in an unreasonable manner to other people. With Ian it was more outbursts that lasted for a very short time. With my mum it could drag on. With me I think it was caused by years and years of caning it, 24-7. And then I stopped. And for a couple of years after that I got depression. Putting all that shit in you and then suddenly stopping, there's got to be some kind of pay- back. I got over it, but it did give me an insight into some of the anger my mother may have showed, some of the ways Ian behaved. But it was different for Ian because he had epilepsy and he was on very heavy barbiturates to treat that and I think those tablets affected his mood, because he wasn't like that all the time. Apart from that he obviously had relationship problems. He had epilepsy. Could he carry on with the band with epilepsy as bad as he had? He couldn't really. We were all in denial about it, but when you think back, the writing was on the wall. He couldn't have carried on. He was too ill. Maybe he felt he was letting us all down. He wanted out, but he couldn't bear letting us down because we'd all fought so hard to make it a success. And that was tearing him apart as much as his relationship. Who knows? No one knows what was really going on in his head because he wouldn't tell you. He wouldn't be straight with you. You might be like that with a girl, but not with a guy. Because you're "soft". It's quite irrational that, isn't it, when you look back, but I'm almost still like that now.

When you look at the lyrics of *Closer* now, does it read like someone trying to communicate something of that, through other means?

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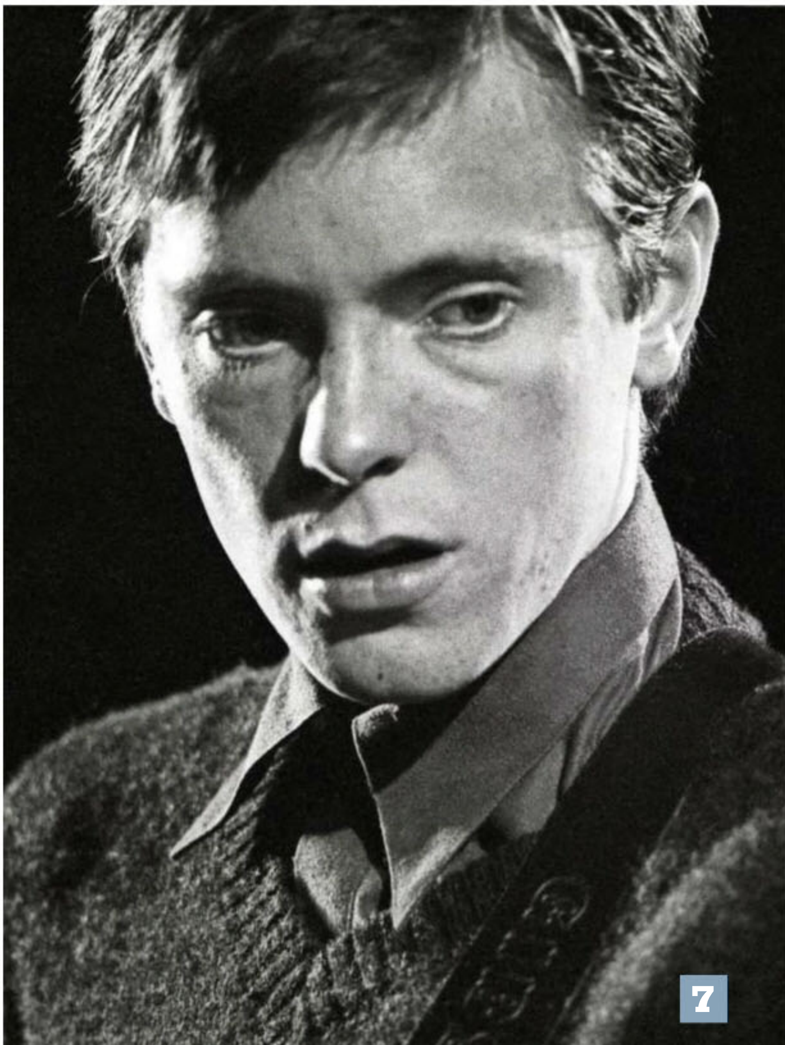


Bernard Sumner, Manchester, June 2015: "Do I feel like a weight has been lifted? I guess it's true."

Andrew Cotterill

> "**Hungover**, playing to **20,000 people**, full of **guilt**. We had this **youthful** desire, to **obliterate**."

Well, you never knew with Ian whether those lyrics were biographical or whether he was just writing about… a character. We listened to the vibe more than the actual words but when we did listen to them we assumed it was some sort of character from the past that he'd met or someone he'd invented. That it wasn't really about him. But you wouldn't stop him and go, "Ian, are these lyrics about you?" We just never did it. And the other thing you've got to remember is, pre the epilepsy and drugs he was just like a cheery, happy-go-lucky bloke, spouting out these heavy words. The lyrics didn't sound like they were about Ian. After he died, we certainly re-evaluated everything. We should have listened [but] it wouldn't have changed anything. We did try and 'cheer him up' but of course it didn't work. Even if we'd known the lyrics were about him it wouldn't have made a blind bit of difference.

Gillian Gilbert joined New Order early on. Did it feel like a balance had been restored or did New Order feel unbalanced at first?

Unbalanced. It took us quite a while to find our feet and start again. What are we going to do about a singer? Oh, you're the singer. All right. I have to write lyrics? Fucking hell, here we go again. You know. But we just knew that we loved being in a band and loved travelling. We loved the lifestyle. Gillian also brought some well-needed femininity. Filthy stories were not allowed. Less farting in the rehearsals rooms. We all stopped being so laddish. Just having another person in was quite refreshing. It was a bit like new life, you know.

In terms of that new emotional dynamic, the idea of suppressed emotions becomes a constant in the music of New Order.

Well, under the bleak music of Joy Division, we were four guys having the best time of our lives, until it all went tits-up. And even in the early days of New Order, when we got to the east coast of America we had a great time. It's been a 30-year party, really. I'm a lot more sober these days. It's made touring with the band much more pleasurable. I was my own worst enemy. Hungover playing to 20,000 people, full of guilt, feeling sorry for yourself, when you just want to be lying in bed, with the curtains drawn. We had this youthful desire to obliterate.

Before, say, 1987 New Order were famously erratic live. One MOJO writer saw you in 1981, pointing at the audience, announcing, "You're shit! And you're shit!" Was this some throwback to punk, nerves, dealing with chaotic technology, or what?

I probably didn't want to be there. And I couldn't get out of it. And probably the night before we'd had an astonishing gig and celebrated and got shit-faced. No mystery to it. It's a man with a rotten hangover stuck on a stage I don't want to be on. All my own fault. With the technology side of it, we were taking instruments that were designed for the studio, out on the road. It added an element of chaos. We never used tapes. Rob [Gretton, band manager] always insisted, "You're not using fucking tapes." But Rob didn't have to go on the fucking stage.

And in 1983 you played Blue Monday live on Top Of The Pops at a time when you were still deeply self-conscious about your ability to sing and perform live…

The rest of the band wanted to play it live. They didn't have to sing. I was like, "What's the point of this?" A big part of the success of Blue Monday is that the production on it is *really* good. Danceable. So it didn't seem logical to spend all that time on production then leave it up to a sound guy at Top Of The Pops who didn't want you to play live anyway, who's used to receiving two channels of stereo with everything on and suddenly he's got like 40 channels and they're playing this weird sort of bloody organ music and… It seemed illogical to put your future in the hands of that kind of attitude.

As a teenager, I thought it was incredibly cool.

I agree. It *was* an incredibly cool thing to do, and every time we went on TV the records went down the charts the next week.

I remember reading somewhere that the lyrics of [1982 12-inch] Temptation were inspired by LSD. Did you ever try to repeat that songwriting method?

No. It was a one-off. There was a period where I just took it all the time, for about two years. But only a tiny, tiny, tiny bit so you'd just get a little (*makes shimmering gesture with hand*). I don't think playing with your brain like that is a good idea. It's almost like sticking chopsticks in your ears, having a fiddle, seeing what results you're gonna get, like some mad fucking professor. I wouldn't recommend it. [But] I think Temptation is probably my favourite New Order song. It's got a spirituality to it. It's really uplifting without actually getting a specific message across. It was interesting to see that you could do that while, at the time, being fairly abstract. I struggled with the literalness of my lyrics in the early days. I didn't want to expose my inner feelings to the general public.

Do you have a favourite Joy Division song?

It's got to be either Love Will Tear Us Apart or Atmosphere. I can't say one or the other. They both have that spirituality. Same as Temptation. They're very moving, in a spiritual way. They go beyond. I don't feel like they came from us. I feel like they come from somewhere else, like they've been given to the band as a gift.

Temptation has an underlying melancholy yet so many points of euphoric uplift. It's what defines your best songs. Where does that come from?

I think it came from a yearning for happiness. A yearning for contentment and happiness. For a long time, I wasn't content or happy. I was having a laugh, and being pretty hedonistic but I wasn't content and happy. But now I guess I am pretty content and happy, so now I have to find inspiration from somewhere else. The best songs, and the best lyrics, you have no idea where they come from. I like to write lyrics late at night when I'm exhausted. A few glasses of wine, I'm tired and I want to go to bed and then something like that will happen. It's like it comes from instinct, your subconscious, that weird feeling between your shoulder blades that cannot be explained.

Two New Order albums that don't really get addressed in the autobiography are *Low Life* and *Brotherhood*. Any reason for that?

What can you write about making an album? I guarantee that if you'd come in the studio and watched us working on them you'd soon be "Er, see you lads. I've got a meeting I've got to go to." It's not a riveting thing. It's just hours and hours of hard slog. No one wants to read about that. I wrote about the troublesome ones.

***Technique* and *Republic* would be the "troublesome" ones. Beneath that melodic uplift you seem to be asking, "What price happiness?" *Republic* now sounds like a cry for help.**

Get me out of here? Yeah, well, perhaps you're hearing the turmoil. By *Republic*, there was a kind of feeling in the band, you know when you put two magnets together with the north poles facing, and they push apart? There was this force pushing us all apart from each other. Whether that was resentment over times gone by or bitterness that had built up, or frustration with the Haçienda and Factory, and "Why are we in here working when it's all for nothing?" The whole thing was a mess, swirling round. I said earlier about being on-stage with a stinking hangover and not wanting to be there, wanting to be curled up in bed with the curtains drawn? Well this was like that but instead of it being just 90 minutes it was lasting weeks and months. It wasn't just me. It was everyone. It perhaps enriches the album, in a way, but songwise it really wasn't our best.

After *Technique* you formed Electronic with Johnny Marr. Was there something about Johnny that said 'safe space'?

Well, I don't like to speak for other people but I think Johnny was burnt out with The Smiths, or with not *all* of The Smiths. He'd just had enough of the situation. As I had. We found ourselves in a similar position at the same point in time, so it was a relief working with him. In the honeymoon period we were as pleasant as hell to each other. Johnny was very interested in electronic instruments. He was a very open-minded musician, but it had been frowned upon in The Smiths. And I didn't have to deal with Rob, Steve, Gillian, Hooky, Tony [Wilson]. One guy wants to go on tour forever. Someone else wants to stop working, go on strike. Someone else doesn't want to come into the studio. Someone wants to get it finished as quickly as possible. Someone's wasting all the money that you've earned. All of that mess and suddenly it was just me and Johnny. Phew. It was like an oasis of calm.

Did you achieve everything you wanted to with Electronic?

I think it reached its conclusion. We did two synth albums. The second one was very difficult because we lost our engineer, ended up engineering ourselves and that dragged on much longer than it should have done. The third one, the more guitar-based album, I think that was a troubled period for Johnny because he had the court case with The Smiths. I'd never say no to working with Johnny again but this new New Order is working so well. This New Order is good. It's such a different situation. It had gone sour. There are no bad vibes.

When you started work on *Get Ready* in 2000, had you finally figured out the right way to make a New Order record?

No. *Get Ready* was produced by Steve Osborne and we wrote a load of songs and got to the studio and basically he said, "Right, what we're going to do is scrap these songs." What? We kept the vocals then rewrote the music in the studio. He just put us in the studio, on the spot, and said things like, "Right, Bernard it's your turn now, play your guitar." He did the same with all of us. At one point I remember thinking, "I'm not enjoying this." You know, I was being put on the spot every fucking day for six months. This isn't fun. What we ended up with was a really good rock record. It worked. So he was right. But it felt like, this isn't the right way to work on a record. It wasn't enjoyable and previously, the whole concept of making a record was have a good time while you're making it. This went against all of that. Steve's a good guy, but he just…changed everything. Whether it still would have been a good record if he hadn't have done that or whether he made it just a different record I don't know. But I like it. Then on *Waiting For The Sirens' Call* we worked with a lot of different producers but we wanted to do it more our own way on this one. Stop the grinding rock songs and be a bit more gentle.

STBERNARD

Four tracks cheered and restored by **Sumner**'s V.S. brand of revivifying musicianship. By **Andrew Male**.

EPIC PSYCH

Sub Sub

This Time I'm Not Wrong

(ROB'S RECORDS' 12-INCH, 1997)

The final single release from the group that would be reborn as Doves, this perfectly showcases all the elements of sad soulfulness and epic Manchester psychedelia that would appear on Doves' debut LP, *Lost Souls*, with Bernard's barbed abstract imagery and nasty cheese-grater guitar lending proceedings a sharp, vicious edge.

DISCO ANGST

The Chemical Brothers

Out Of Control

(VIRGIN 12-INCH, 1999)

Recorded for the duo's third LP, 1999's *Surrender*, Out Of Control was Tom and Ed Chemical connecting the dots of New Order mid-'80s 12-inchers and their New York disco inspirations. The bassline references Bobby O's She Has A Way while Bernard's lyrics mine late-night Manhattan club angst: "Maybe you think my moustache is too much."

HEAVENLY HEARTBREAK

Electronic

Twisted Tenderness

(PARLOPHONE LP TRACK, 1999)

Written in reaction to the drawn-out sessions for 1996's *Raise The Pressure*, and amid the fall-out from The Smiths' court case (Morrissey's Court of Appeal case was in November 1998) the title track from the third and final Electronic collaboration blends Marr's plangent melancholy with Sumner's heavenly heartbreak in a fitting tale of undying loyalty to an untrustworthy partner.

EVIL RIFF

Primal Scream

Shoot Speed Kill Light

(CREATION LP TRACK, 2000)

The relentless mosquito-whine punk riff on *XTRMNTR*'s epic space-rock closer, is, for many, the defining evil essence of Primal Scream's sixth studio album. In case you're unsure what part Sumner played on a track that also featured Kevin Shields on guitar, a version of the riff reappeared, on Rock The Shack from New Order's made-under-duress 2001 LP, *Get Ready*.

Peter Hook announcing the end of New Order in 2007 coincided with him buying the rights to the Haçienda name. Did you think, here's somebody coping, not very well, with grief and loss; the end of Factory, the collapse of the Haçienda nightclub, the loss of Rob Gretton, Tony Wilson's illness…

It felt like a betrayal. As I say in the book, he forgets the fact that me, Stephen [Morris, drums] and Gillian, and Tony and [Factory co-founder] Alan Erasmus had put thousands and thousands of pounds and blood, sweat and tears into the Haçienda, and that didn't matter. That had been written off, very kindly, by him. It didn't matter as much as *his* blood, sweat and tears. So, yes, it felt like a betrayal.

You sail now. What do you get from sailing that you don't get from being in a band?

It's the opposite. When you're on a boat you've got a clear horizon, no people in front of you, you're not staying in a hotel, you're with family or friends and you're in nature, in the open air. I like sailing round Turkey. You just drop the anchor, someone swims ashore with the rope and ties it to a pine tree and you've got beautiful turquoise water, a pine forest at the back of you and you just sit on the back of the boat and drink wine. That's the sort of sailing I'm talking about. And the next day you're in a different place and you've got the challenge of getting there, and the arrival drink as a reward.

How long does the arrival drink last?

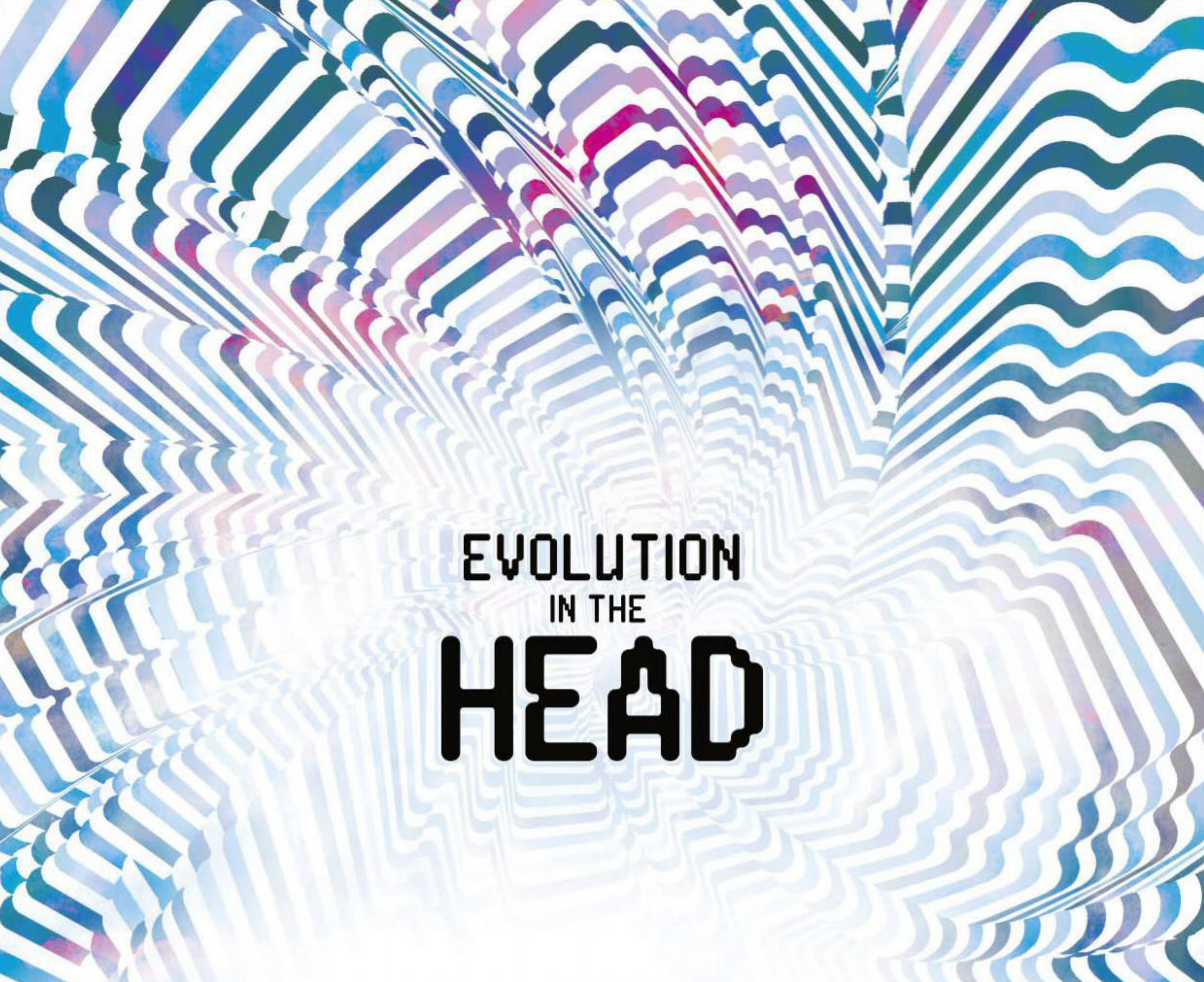
Usually starts about four o'clock in the afternoon and finishes about two o'clock in the morning.

You've told me your favourite Joy Division and New Order songs. Do you have a track that defines where New Order are at at this present moment.

It's too fresh. Actually, I do like Tutti Frutti. It's a bit tongue-in-cheek. A bit silly. Anything goes, really. No rules.

You're having a laugh again.

Yes! When you play the album to people, when Tutti Frutti starts there's always that look of, What the fuck is going on here? Yeah, having a laugh. Yeah. I see your point and the answer is yes. And I see what you mean, about a weight being lifted. Yes, or else that wouldn't be possible. Your first question: "Do I feel like a weight has been lifted?" I understand it now. I guess it's true but I didn't know it was true.



EVOLUTION IN THE HEAD

IN THEIR EIGHT-YEAR EXISTENCE, TAME IMPALA HAVE TRANSFORMED FROM INTROVERTED DEALERS IN SPACED-OUT PSYCHEDELIA TO DIGITAL SOUL-POP ARCHITECTS DRIVEN BY FRONTMAN/SOLE CREATOR, KEVIN PARKER. ANDREW PERRY MET MAN AND BAND TO TALK SONIC EXPERIMENTS AND EMOTIONAL AWAKENINGS. PORTRAIT BY GUY EPPEL.

ON AUGUST 19, 2012, ON-STAGE AT BUENOS Aires' Niceto Club, Kevin Parker had a revelation. He was leading Tame Impala's five-man touring incarnation on its first visit to South America when, during a rapturously received inaugural set in the Argentinian capital, an interaction with one hysterical punter changed his whole outlook.

Parker and his cohorts, from the remote city of Perth in Western Australia, had always pursued music with a cavalier disregard for the appreciation of record companies, or, indeed, audiences. In their isolationist, indie-rock bubble, the least display of showmanship equalled selling out.

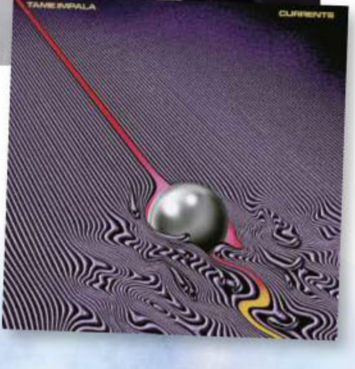
However, above and beyond Tame Impala's proggy, guitar-crunching sound, perfected over five years since he started using the name in 2007, the geeky, reclusive Kevin always harboured pop dreams, thanks to a lifelong obsession with The Beatles and Michael Jackson.

Tame Impala's breathlessly acclaimed second album, 2012's *Lonerism*, had given Parker merely cult recognition, its title finally confirming that he'd actually been making his records entirely solo, drafting in a touring line-up to replicate them live. In that light, he was hailed as a wunderkind, the architect of a new psychedelia for the post-millennial Pro Tools era. Yet on-stage he remained withdrawn behind collar-length curtains of brown hair, hamstrung both by his shyness and his posse's shoegazing sensibilities – until that fateful night at the Niceto Club. There, the crowd's sheer exuberance nudged him out of his shell, and down to the pit, where he came face to face with the delirious front rows.

"I don't know what I was doing down there," he recalls today with an embarrassed smirk. "I'd seen people crying at our shows before, but this girl was reaching out to give me her bracelet, and I took it, and I put it on my wrist, and then I was like, 'I may as well give her the one I'm wearing.' So I gave it to her, and as I looked back she was absolutely bawling her eyes out, just holding this bracelet of mine." ➢

“I know I always wanted to be successful… I wanted to be loved”: Tame Impala’s Kevin Parker, Washington DC, June 6, 2015.

Going with the current: Parker and the touring Tame Impala.



He pauses, as if to consider the import of the moment.

"It was the realisation," he concludes, "that whether I like it or not, I have the potential to have an effect on people. I'd always had this success guilt. I was unable to accept that I wanted people to know about me. At some point I had to say to myself, Stop bullshitting yourself, stop hating yourself, and be a part of it. If you don't come out of your skin now, you never will, and you'll always be this person in denial."

Almost three years on, Parker, now 29, is reaping the rewards of that shift in attitude. He's just released his third album – his first for Universal. Called *Currents*, it explicitly charts the changes its creator has undergone through his mid-twenties – a kind of pop-aural *Bildungsroman*. Irresistibly melodic and heart-on-sleeve, it's widely been tipped as this year's big breakthrough alternative record. From here on, denial is not an option.

"I REALISED IT'S A LOT HARDER TO REACH PEOPLE'S HEARTS THAN IT IS TO REACH THEIR BRAINS."

IN THE PARKING LOT BEHIND Washington DC's sleek 4,000-capacity Echo Stage venue, Parker and his group are emptying a substantial amount of water from inside their vintage analogue synthesizers. Yesterday's mid-evening festival set in Cincinnati was beset by torrential rain. The synths are fine, but several FX pedals were consumed in the deluge, so Parker calls a lengthy soundcheck, to reconfigure the complex armoury of effects he's devised for each instrument.

Job done, the band celebrate by shooting hoops outside – all except Parker, who lounges nearby in the sun, sporting a pink tie-dye T-shirt, black jeans and flip-flops. Sex, drugs and rock'n'roll are conspicuously not on the agenda, but spirits are high at the culmination of a five-week US tour that's kicked off the *Currents* campaign in style.

Initially, online controversy suggested many existing Tame Impala fans would've liked those synths to drown alongside the FX pedals. The new direction of teaser tracks sparked outrage from some: the pulsating, disco-fied Let It Happen in particular elicited accusations that Parker had 'gone Daft Punk'.

"I guess it was to be expected," says the man himself, not unamused by the furore. "Obviously, I know the gritty guitars are a flavour that people are attached to. I find it fascinating what different sounds seem to trigger in people's brains: some people are like, 'Oh my God, it sounds like EDM', but others are like, 'I dunno, man, it's got that same old Motown beat he does…'"

He laughs, adding: "That was half the point of having a more silky synth sound this time, to embody that sense of change in the lyrics, musically. At first it seems foreign and alien, and the whole point is to jolt someone that's attached to [the old sound], to think in a different way."

In conversation, Parker talks deliberately, with little eye contact, but much dry humour – the irony being, he notes, that he made the album on more or less exactly the same equipment as he did *Lonerism*. As he opens up about his career thus far, it becomes clear that he was always drawn to music rich in tone and texture, going back to pre-teen years, when he lived with his mother after his parents separated.

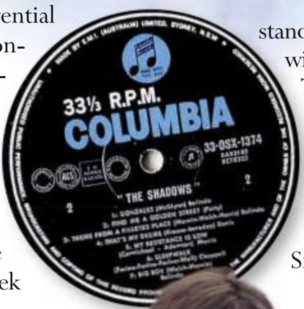
"I'd stay with my dad some weekends," he recalls, "and he'd always play Shadows guitar on a Sunday afternoon. I remember it being the most emotional, heavy thing, because I was due to go back to my mum's, and back to school the next day, so it was the end of the weekend, and the end of staying at dad's house. Shadows songs like Sleepwalk are so emotional for me, even though they're just instrumental. Some of the chords hit you right in the chest."

As his mum had a series of boyfriends knocking around the house, he soon moved in with his dad. In his teens, young Kevin went off the rails, falling into drinking, smoking weed and shoplifting, but gradually started to channel his energies into learning drums, then guitar. He'd play along with his dad's Shadows tunes, and, circa 2001-2, aged 15-16, create soundscapes on the family computer, using an early recording application.

"It was super-minimal and archaic by today's standards," he says, "but I'd create these 13-minute pieces with backwards drums and the sound of a train going by. There was a bit of pipe for the pool cleaner, and I'd wave that around – woo-ooo-oooo – all sorts of shit."

At university, Parker lived in a rented house in Troy Terrace, in the Perth suburb of Daglish. There, amid chaotic, drug-strewn scenes, the touring Tame Impala's future personnel duly assembled, including Dom Simper (his oldest school friend), Jay Watson, Nick Allbrook, Cam Avery and Joe Ryan (his current lighting tech). They grouped up into a number of separate bands, each fronted by a different housemate.

Tame Impala, however, was different. "It was always far less of a communal thing," says Parker. "We'd all be making music downstairs, with whatever band – Mink Mussel Creek, or Pond [Allbrook-fronted, now signed to Caroline], then I'd go upstairs and work on *my* music up in my bedroom, on my own with my headphones on, and that was Tame Impala." His urge to write music arose because, "I generally considered myself to have



Parker's ex, Melody Prochet, 2012; (above) The Shadows' influential first LP.

Guy Eppel, Diane Sagnier, Getty Images

no presence as a personality. It was to try to have an impact, make friends, impress girls – the usual teenage shit, but I felt like I couldn't do it as a person. I had to do it some other way."

Though by nature the most retiring and withdrawn of his peers, it was Parker whose music connected with the outside world. Via postings on MySpace, he landed a deal with hip Aussie label Modular, lying to them about the fact that he actually recorded on his own.

For 2008's self-titled EP, he aped a Cream/White Stripes blues-rock band playing live in a room. Recording 2010's debut proper, *Innerspeaker*, in a leaky house down the coast in Injidup, he brought Simper and Watson along for moral support, but their contributions were limited. The music morphed into a more wondrous, tempo-shifting prog-pop. Stand-out track Solitude Is Bliss "had this confidence that I hadn't had in my music ever – the lyrics were, 'Fuck you guys, I'm doing it on my own.' Even when I did it, I thought I was way out of my comfort zone."

With its Nile Rodgers riff, the song pointed the way towards the more funky, gleefully self-sufficient sound of 2012's *Lonerism*, for which he discovered a bold way of recording. "With this new computer programme," he explains, "I had literally an infinity of tracks to fill. I was thinking of it more like an orchestra. Like, 'So this guitar's gonna come in at this moment, then a synth swoosh', and I could see it all on the screen. I could layer my voice 10 times over, just for a fraction of a second – and I was doing it, too. I was drunk on this music-producing power – drunk on potential."

Even after the album was widely voted the year's best around the world, he was still "too self-conscious. I needed to stand next to a bunch of guys in photos. I was too shy to be myself."

In the next couple of years, that would change.

WHEN THIS WRITER FIRST MET Kevin Parker, he'd just rocked Glastonbury 2013. He was sat backstage with Melody Prochet, whose intoxicatingly lush *Melody's Echo Chamber* album he'd produced at their shared flat in Paris, alongside *Lonerism*. They were holding hands, saying goodbye, before their respective tour buses rolled off in opposite directions.

It was obviously a close relationship, but it was soon over, pitching Parker into a turbulent few months of moving back to Perth, buying a house, building a studio there, and finally translating a backlog of song ideas into concrete music.

Though he's careful to avoid specifics, the upheavals in his private life are almost certainly part of the rites of passage documented in the lyrics on *Currents*. One particular song, Past Life, is loaded with regret about a break-up.

"It's about a guy who's growing up, and he's moved on," Parker explains. "There was this crazy part of his life, completely unhinged and romantic. He was just living his life from day to day, but then he shut that world off. Now he's living this really monotonous existence, and he sees someone he hasn't seen since that time, and it completely time-warps him. He suddenly realises that he's shut out this part of his life, like a cheap solution to block out the regret of not going in this direction. There was potential in his life, and he fucked it."

One inference is that Parker chose the band over Prochet. Two tracks later, 'Cause I'm A Man lampoons such masculine inclinations, but the stronger 'current' that runs through Parker, on Let It Happen and Yes, I'm Changing, is a new sense of purpose, a desire to make an impact with his music on the biggest scale, with an uninhibited pop record. "Put it this way," he says, "I've realised it's a lot harder to reach people's hearts than it is to reach people's brains. When I became a 'rock musician', I assumed pop music was easy to write, and that interesting rock music, or alternative music, was hard. It was only later I realised that writing a pop song is the hardest thing musically. To touch that many people that way, it's such a difficult-to-attain art form – like the flower on top of the mountain."

So, Parker consciously stripped away the trappings of his alt-rock sonic identity – spiky guitar sounds, indecipherable vocals buried in the mix – so he could communicate directly, with uncompromised commercial reach. His singing, which often soars into falsetto, nods towards his childhood hero, Michael Jackson, and to Frank Ocean's 2012 album, *Channel Orange*. As such, in Parker's ever-evolving soundworld, *Currents* is his version of David Bowie's *Young Americans* – his white soul statement.

Come showtime at DC's Echo Stage, the change in Parker's demeanour is dramatic – no more shoegazing; he projects. In a lavishly illuminated 90-minute set, he corrals mass hand-clapping and sing-alongs, and gamely presses flesh at the front. During the penultimate Alter Ego, as if in a move he learnt at showbiz finishing school, he points at the audience and gushes, "This song is for *you*!"

Before the show, Parker revealed that his live operation used to be introverted and confused, because they were exactly that, as a band. "Nobody knew their role, and neither did I. Jay [Watson, keyboards] and I used to squabble like five-year-olds. He almost left the band a couple of times."

In every sense, they've matured. Watson has just moved to Dalston in east London with his girlfriend, while fellow synthman Dom Simper has relocated to Amsterdam. Each has come to realise it's a pretty good deal just to walk into a band of Tame Impala's stature for the 'fun bit', missing out on the endless man hours and pressure of sculpting an album. But that's the part Kevin loves, so everyone's happy.

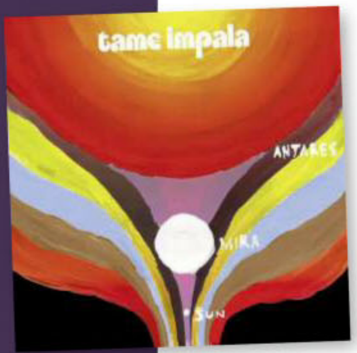
"These days I'm more honest with myself, which was a big step," Parker summarises. "I know I always wanted to be successful. It goes back to me as a teenager: I wanted to be loved, because I wasn't being loved. So that just grows as a brain mechanism. I feel like I probably know how to deal with it more these days, and I know how to play the part as a successful artist."

That'll come in handy in the months ahead.

BYTES OF PASSAGE

Four songs that chart KEVIN PARKER's emotional growth. By ANDREW PERRY.

HALF FULL GLASS OF WINE



(Tame Impala EP, Modular, 2008)

Parker posted this recording on his MySpace page for his friends' consumption a good two or three years before Modular stumbled on it, and ultimately released it on his debut EP. Cut in the grip of a blues-rock fixation, its Creamy stop/start riffology was no power-trio jam, but the solo Parker's carefully pieced together approximation thereof.

SOLITUDE IS BLISS

(Innerspeaker, Modular, 2010)

Starting with a shimmering Nile Rodgers-like lick, rising to a garage-psych chorus of "you will never come close to how I feel", this tune bridges the pure psych influences of his debut LP to later, exploratory, synth/disco-embracing records.

WHY WON'T THEY TALK TO ME?

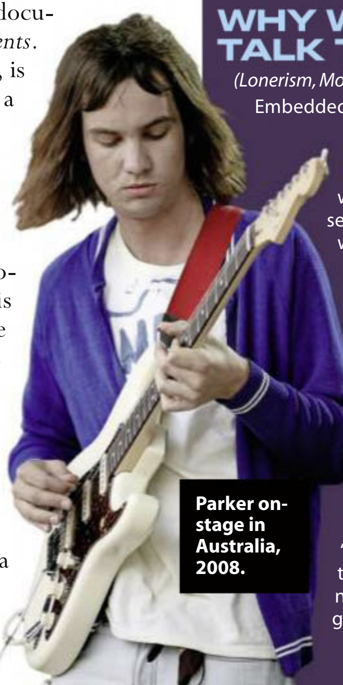
(Lonerism, Modular, 2012)

Embedded in opulent analogue synths and sputtering beats, Parker multitracks his reedy voice into an orchestra of paranoid wonderings, epitomising his second LP's 'lonerist' mentality. It was psychedelia, but not as we'd ever really heard it before.

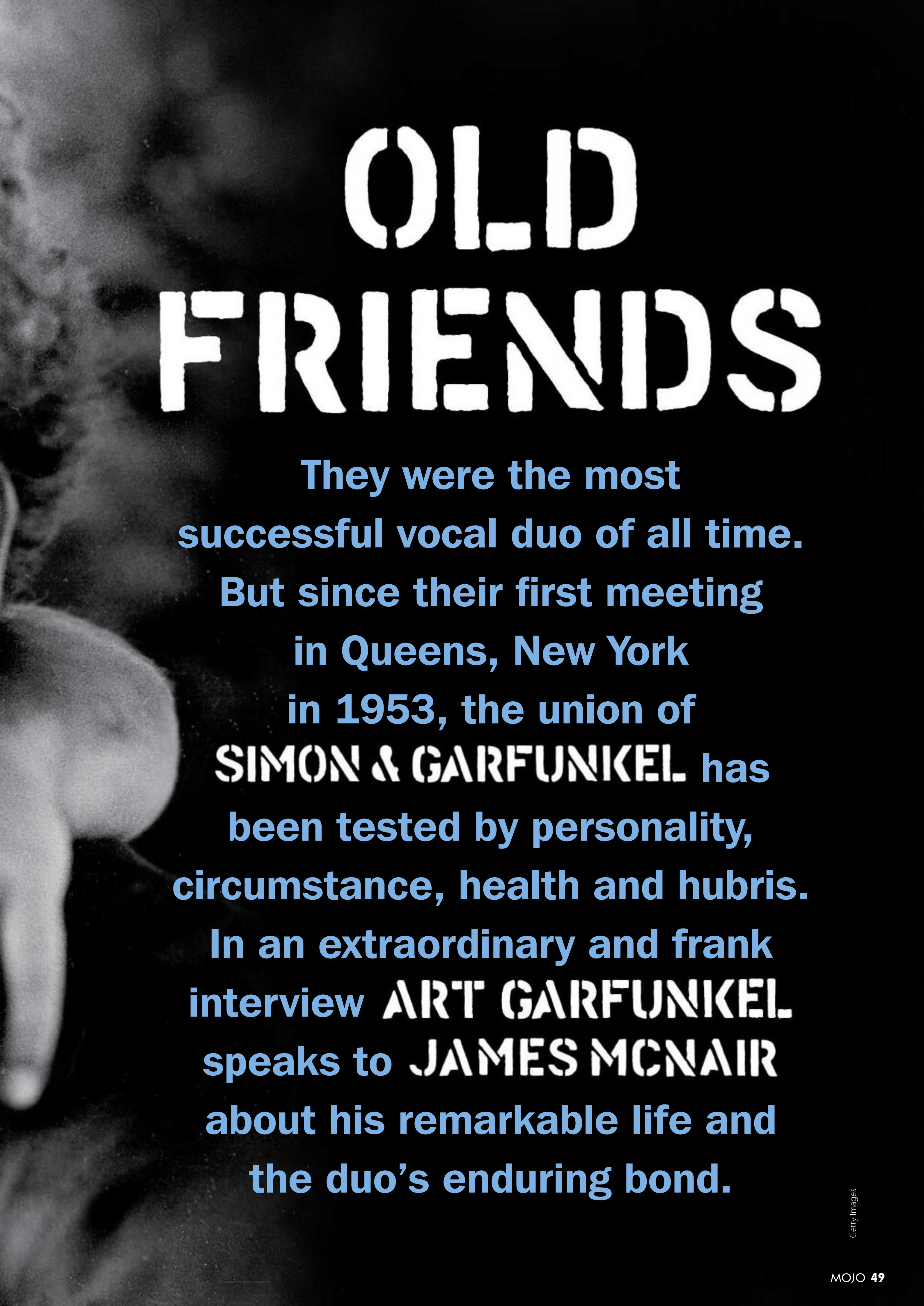
LET IT HAPPEN

(Currents, Fiction/Universal, 2015)

The new album's dazzling, French house-inspired opener maps out Parker's craving to give in to his pop impulses, and let success finally happen to him. The lines "All this running around/Trying to cover my shadow," flag up his need to come clean about his solo genius – indeed, be proud of it.



Parker on-stage in Australia, 2008.



OLD FRIENDS

They were the most successful vocal duo of all time. But since their first meeting in Queens, New York in 1953, the union of SIMON & GARFUNKEL has been tested by personality, circumstance, health and hubris. In an extraordinary and frank interview ART GARFUNKEL speaks to JAMES MCNAIR about his remarkable life and the duo's enduring bond.

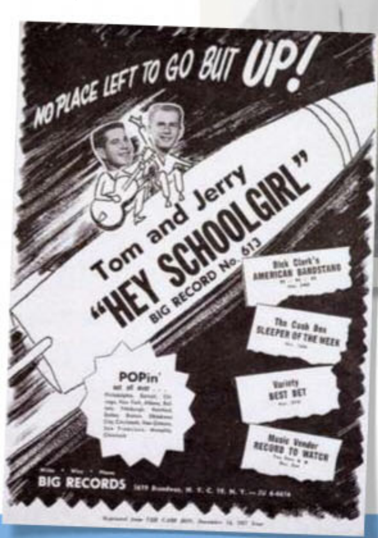
Getty Images

ART GARFUNKEL STILL REMEMBERS when Paul Simon arrived in Kew Garden Hills, Queens, in 1953.

"Ever seen Rebel Without A Cause?" he asks. "Well, James Dean had moved to our neighbourhood."

The Simons had come from Newark, New Jersey, and Paul was, says Garfunkel, "quite bohemian. He was a witty, turned-on guy who obviously liked me and was pitching for my attention. We were bright kids who jumped eighth grade and by the time we graduated from Public School 164 we were each other's person and everybody else looked away. We didn't chase girls quite as avidly as the others did. We were singers."

It's a particularly warm May afternoon in London and MOJO and Garfunkel are perched on wooden benches in the olive tree-appointed cloister garden by the Museum Of The Order Of St John in Clerkenwell. A robust 73, Garfunkel is wearing a grey zip-up fleece, some well worn-in running shoes, and a white canvas hat, retrieved from the hotel on account of the sun. Beside him is a manilla folder containing notes for an autobiography he's currently writing, and pages of his poetry, some of which he hands over to me, without comment.


NO PLACE LEFT TO GO BUT UP!
Tom and Jerry
"HEY SCHOOLGIRL"
BIG RECORD No. 613
Dick Clark's AMERICAN BANDSTAND
The Cash Box SLEEPER OF THE WEEK
Variety BEST BET
Music Vendor RECORD TO WATCH
POPin' all of over
BIG RECORDS

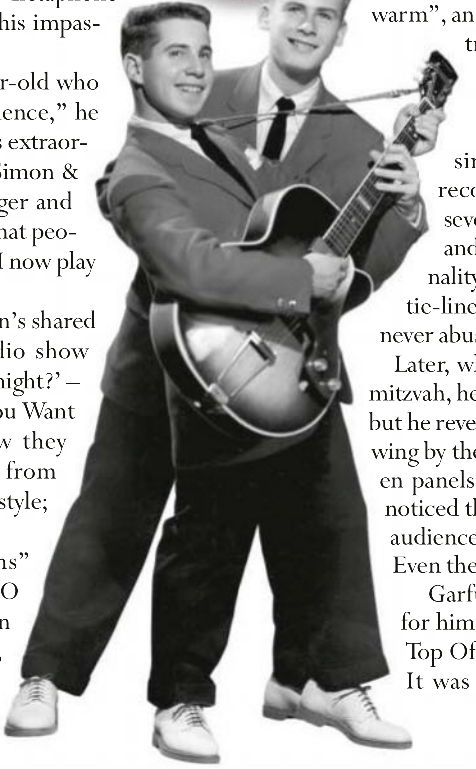
The mood is relaxed, but the day began strangely, with the singer trying to convince MOJO not to record the interview, arguing that "I don't feel I'll have your full attention while you are relying on that thing."

"I WAS A BRILLIANT AUDIENCE FOR PAUL. THAT

BIG
RECORDS
613
VOCAL WITH ORCHESTRA
HEY, SCHOOLGIRL
TOM & JERRY
BIG RECORDS, INC

Only after MOJO has reluctantly returned to the nearby hotel to fetch his notebook does Garfunkel say, "OK, I don't want to give you a hard time – you can do it your way." As the 'record' button is pressed, he intones, "Now I'm your stooge," and the next three hours of conversation possess a precarious, sometimes surreal quality. Garfunkel regularly talks about himself in the third person, and at one point requests my dictaphone in order to listen back to several minutes of his impassioned venting.

"Let's assume we're talking to the 23-year-old who doesn't know the history, and let's have patience," he says, as he gathers himself to tell MOJO of his extraordinary journey with peerless '60s vocal duo Simon & Garfunkel, and his testing solo career as singer and actor. "I spent the first half of my life hoping that people would be interested in me; it's not right if I now play hard to get, so come across, Mr Garfunkel."



His eyes sparkle as he talks of his and Simon's shared love for Alan Freed's WINS New York radio show ("'Do you wanna squeeze me all through the night?' – you knew that line in Bobby Freeman's Do You Want To Dance was really about fucking"), how they "tooled that perfectionist vocal blend right from the start" and how "Paul started to sing in my style; more pastel."

But there are also "misrepresentations" Garfunkel wants to correct, and he looks MOJO dead in the eye when he says, "Now, when people give me a hard time about all the fights, I say, But isn't the more remarkable thing that we were so damn close as to create that vocal blend in the first place? We didn't share DNA but we almost did, and that's Simon & Garfunkel right there: an exercise in extreme listening. I'd pull my chair real close and watch how Paul was dictioning [sic] his consonants. That's love.

"Don't I have a different interview style than Paul Simon," he offers later, out of the blue. "Paul's much more guarded – I'm all over the place."

BORN IN 1941, ART GARFUNKEL WAS raised in a middle-class brick house in Queens, the middle child of three. His mother Rose was "a typical Jewish mom, very normal, very warm", and his father, Jack, was a Rumanian emigré and travelling salesman who sold army surplus bomber jackets for the Monarch Clothing Company.

Even at the age of five, Artie knew that his singing voice was a gift. The Webcor wire recorder his parents gave him when he turned seven enabled him to hone his talent, recording and re-recording until he was happy with his tonality and intonation. Now he felt his voice was "a tie-line to The Lord Himself", something he must never abuse or take for granted.

Later, when Garfunkel sang for four hours at his bar mitzvah, he didn't know what the Hebrew words meant, but he revelled in the ancient, minor-key melodies given wing by the high-ceilinged synagogue's reflective wooden panels. The teenager in the white satin gown also noticed the effect his voice could have on others. "The audience was men, not women, and they teared-up. Even then I thought, I may have a calling here."

Garfunkel says that melody quickly became king for him. Illustrating, he sings MOJO snatches of On Top Of Old Smoky and Nat King Cole's Too Young. It was Garfunkel's rendition of Cole's 1951 US

Breaking the silence: (far left) Paul Simon (left) and Art Garfunkel holding a Tom & Jerry publicity shot; a flyer and the first 45; as T&J again, 1957; (right) as Simon & Garfunkel, circa 1964; (below) Paul's True Taylor breakaway; the duo's breakthrough single, with added 's'; their debut album.

I COULD SING WELL WAS ALMOST INVISIBLE.”

Number 1 at a school talent show – and its effect on the girls of PS 164 – that so impressed Paul Simon, resulting in the formation of their doo wop group The Peptones, and its subsequent paring-back to a duo obsessed with the vocal-harmony finesse of The Everly Brothers.

Dubbing themselves Tom & Jerry, Artie and Paul signed to Sid Prosen's Big Records in 1957 aged 15. Their misremembering of the lyrics of the Everlys' Hey Doll Baby helped them pen their own chart debut Hey Schoolgirl, and the song sold over 100,000 copies after Prosen's $200 payola bribe to Alan Freed ensured generous airplay. Soon came a prestigious slot on pioneering TV pop show American Bandstand, Artie and Paul sharing a bill with Jerry Lee Lewis.

“That thrill ran through me in a very important way,” recalls Garfunkel. “I didn't meet Jerry Lee – I just watched him, this wild Southerner, playing Great Balls Of Fire. I remember standing at the urinal taking a piss before the show and overhearing two of the male dancers talking:

‘Who's on the show tonight?’

‘Some jerks called Tom & Jerry.’”

When the royalties for Hey Schoolgirl came in, Simon spent his on a red Impala Convertible. “My money went to college,” says Garfunkel. “Paul was red-blooded; I was more introverted, more of a homework king.”

Three further Tom & Jerry singles failed to chart, and when Simon released his playful rockabilly solo single True Or False under the pseudonym True Taylor in 1958, Garfunkel felt massively betrayed.

BIG
RECORDS
VOCAL
MPLE COPY
614
NOT FOR SALE
TRUE OR FALSE
(Lee Simon)
TRUE TAYLOR

the sounds of silence
we've got a groovey thing goin'
Simon & Garfunkel

WEDNESDAY MORNING, 3AM
SIMON & GARFUNKEL

Getty Images, Sony (2)

“Did you get into that with Paul?” he asks MOJO, knowing that I spoke to Simon, back in 2011. “Let's not go there.”

The duo parted company for several years. Simon studied English at Queens College; Garfunkel architecture then art history at Columbia College. Upon graduating, he briefly moved to the San Francisco Bay area to work in construction.

It was after seeing *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* album in a record store window in 1963 and falling for its cover shot of Bob and Suze Rotolo in the West Village snow, that Garfunkel thought, “I want a piece of that.”

How did you come to work with Paul again?

“I was riding my bike home in Forest Hills and I ran into him in the street. Unlike all the other times in previous years, I decided not to avoid him. Sure, he'd burned me, but you will love your crooked neighbour with your crooked heart, right?”

What happened next?

“(*Thinking*) Did he have his guitar? I feel like he played me a song right there and then and I thought, Hot stuff! We met up that night at Queens College and we sang just a couple of things: Carlos Dominguez and He Was My Brother. Everybody in the fraternity who passed by stopped. I thought, Of course. It's extraordinary what's coming out of our mouths. We'd sing and then stop and giggle. We couldn't finish the lines because it was so cute.”

When did you first realise the greatness of Paul's songwriting gift?

“I was in my apartment on Amsterdam Avenue – I'd be around 24 – and Paul called me from Queens and said, ‘Artie, I think I wrote my best song, you gotta hear this.’ He comes into my kitchen, amongst the roaches, and he shows me The Sound Of Silence. I take melody and he ➢

Feelin' groovy: Simon & Garfunkel in Columbia Studios, New York City, 1967; (opposite) a selected discography plus Joseph Heller's novel, source of a contentious screenplay.

takes harmony and it's great. It had a passion and a commitment to the lyric. Paul was on the case, full of talent.”

Then came the demo session that led to you signing to Columbia…

“You know what I remember most about that? Paul called me that night and used some Queens slang which was a reversal. He said, ‘How come you're not the greatest singer Artie?’, meaning how come you are. He was so pleased that we sang so well and that Garfunkel's voice was so useful for his desires. It's one of the only times I can recall Paul giving tribute to me.”

Did you try to write songs for Simon & Garfunkel?

“No. I was impressed by how fucking great Paul Simon was. The idea that I might go into this ‘me too’ thing seemed ridiculous. It was clearly something he was very good at.”

You recently said that you still don't know what to do with your hands when performing. Might that have stemmed from the height differential between Paul and yourself; from you feeling more conspicuous? In some of the early publicity shots you're leaning over…

“Yeah, isn't that weird? I was a nurturer. I took my friend Paul Simon and I tried to be mama. It's a very important thing when talent is expressing itself that the audience has quality. Nearness. Awareness. Children work for mummy and daddy's love and affection. Paul thrived on knowing Artie gets it. When he did something good I lit up, and when he did something very good I lit up more. He thought, ‘Good. Now I can go to town as an artist.’ This is a big part of Simon & Garfunkel. I was a brilliant audience for Paul. And the fact that I could sing well was almost invisible. The world gets it. I got it. But the vibe between us treated that as nothing.”

SIMON & GARFUNKEL
SOUNDS OF SILENCE
Simon and Garfunkel
Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme
Simon and Garfunkel
Bridge Over Troubled Water
BOOKENDS/SIMON & GARFUNKEL

How would you characterise your role in Simon & Garfunkel's music?

“I was a gifted singer and together we were wonderful record makers. If you ask me how I really see those years and what we did… well it's not on the mike; it's in the control room. I'm George Martin and Geoff Emerick. I'm a record producer. I made the *Bridge Over Troubled Water* album and *Bookends* and *Parsley, Sage…* I made them from behind the glass. I sent out on mike these wonderful singers, Paul and Artie. I gave Artie interesting suspensions and harmonic leaps because it worked for the Record, capital ‘R’. Paul made songs. The songs were the heart of the record. But there's no record without the musicians giving you a great groove. If you don't book a keyboard player who knows how to make it swing like Jerry Lee, you have no record. The song goes down the drain.”

Let's talk about *Bridge Over Troubled Water* and Simon & Garfunkel's break-up. Mike Nichols had asked both of you to be in Catch 22, but later wrote Paul out of the screenplay. You flew to Mexico for filming, leaving Paul to continue writing. He alludes to this on The Only Living Boy In New York, a song that reads like a lonely man's message of support to a friend, but his ‘So long, Artie!’ on So Long, Frank Lloyd Wright seems more pointed…

“(*Interrupting*) Now remember: I've given you a sense of who these two guys are and what a nurturer Art Garfunkel is. Garfunkel has taken his singing talent and put it as an invisible, automatic thing on the side, and in the age of the singer-songwriter, there has developed an unnaturally overgrown sense of what Simon & Garfunkel is: the writer. Now go on…”

…Well, when I spoke to Paul in 2011, he said: “Singing that on So Long, Frank Wright fitted, because Artie had studied architecture. But I guess the bigger picture was that him flying to Mexico was a disappointment I was trying to block out. That was probably the main reason Simon & Garfunkel broke up. But I think we would have broken up anyway. All duos do. It's just too hard.”

“All duos do? I find that really disappointing.” (*Garfunkel becomes increasingly upset and incensed as he processes the quote.*) All duos do? Do they? Not those who are impressed by their great good fortune. Then they recognise the truth: we've been working too hard… let's have a rest. That's a less enlightened fellow talking. This is a man who has lost it, lost the sense that we were sitting on top of the fucking world. What's terribly disappointing is that there's a sixth album we could have made after *Bridge Over Troubled Water* that would have been great. And a seventh.”

So what's your take on the Catch 22 thing?

“I thought it enriched us. For once I didn't wait around for two months, I did something that gave more identity to the Artie side of Simon & Garfunkel. The truth is Catch 22 is a picaresque novel with about 28 different characters, so there was a shortening that was necessary and Artie Garfunkel was deemed more camera-worthy than Paul Simon. There. I said it.”

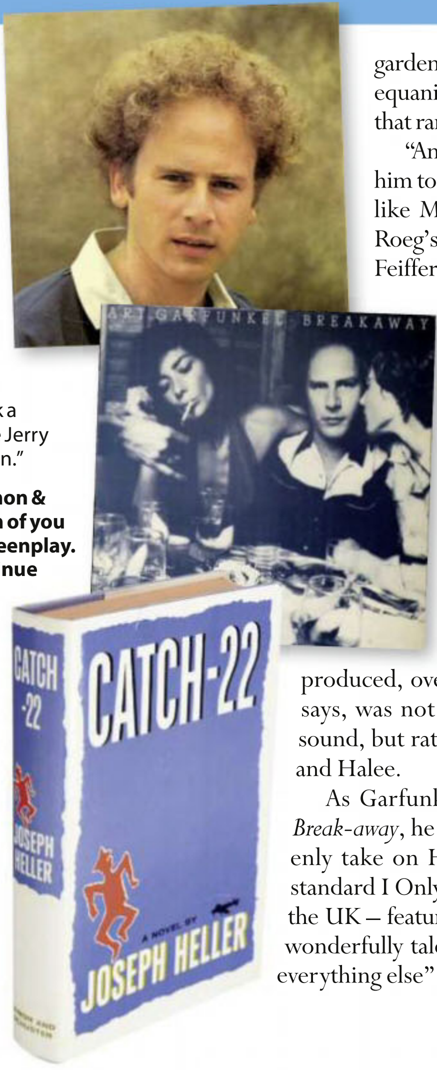
But Paul also told me he didn't think you would have been interested in stuff like [early Simon solo hits] Mother And Child Reunion and Me And Julio Down By The Schoolyard.

“That's bullshit. That's all rationale for him turning his back on something the world loves: Simon & Garfunkel.”

“I WAS MORE CAMERA-WORTHY THAN PAUL.”

GARFUNKEL NOW REALISES HE HAS become very emotional. “Maybe I should take a walk around the block,” he says quietly, looking away from MOJO, and beyond the garden walls. He stays put, though, slowly regaining his equanimity as we discuss the Art Garfunkel film career that ran from 1970's Catch 22 to 2010's The Rebound.

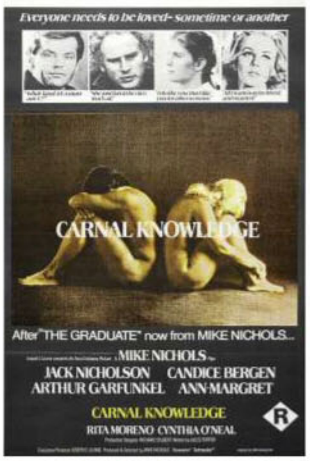
“An offer is an offer,” he says, when asked what drew him to the outer reaches of Hollywood cinema, in films like Mike Nichols' Carnal Knowledge and Nicolas Roeg's Bad Timing, “but with Carnal Knowledge Jules Feiffer wrote a great fucking script and I do love that dark, subversive edge. Even on my first solo album I recorded Down In The Willow Garden, a song about a man who sticks a sabre through his love and throws her in the river.”



Peaking at Number 5 in the US, 1973's *Angel Clare*, named for a character in Thomas Hardy's Tess Of The d'Urbervilles, suggested that Garfunkel *sans* Simon material could work. The stand-out was a stirring take on Jimmy Webb's All I Know. Covering other giants of song such as Randy Newman and Van Morrison, Garfunkel and the trusted Simon & Garfunkel engineer Roy Halee co-produced, over-dubbing liberally. The intention, Garfunkel says, was not to move away from the Simon & Garfunkel sound, but rather to show how much it had owed to himself and Halee.

As Garfunkel assembled songs for his 1975 follow-up *Break-away*, he moved further into the mainstream. His heavenly take on Harry Warren's 1934 crooner and doo wop standard I Only Have Eyes For You – his first solo Number 1 in the UK – featured Nicky Hopkins on electric piano and “that wonderfully talented Beatles nut Andrew Gold on just about everything else”.

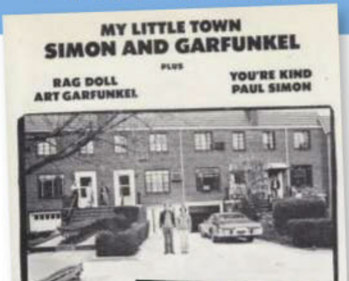
Getty Images

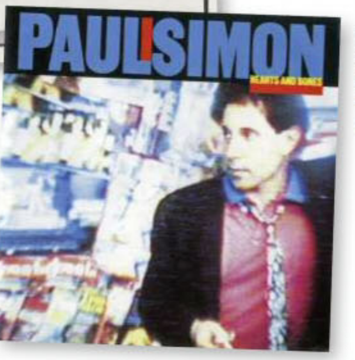

Everyone needs to be loved– sometime or another
CARNAL KNOWLEDGE
After "THE GRADUATE" now from MIKE NICHOLS...
MIKE NICHOLS
JACK NICHOLSON CANDICE BERGEN
ARTHUR GARFUNKEL ANN-MARGRET
CARNAL KNOWLEDGE
RITA MORENO CYNTHIA O'NEAL
R

Face the camera: (clockwise from bottom left) Garfunkel carries Theresa Russell in Bad Timing (1980); with Jack Nicholson in Carnal Knowlege (1971); that film's poster; with long-term girlfriend Laurie Bird in Beverly Hills, April 1977, two years before she committed suicide; in 1970's Catch 22 (from left) Bob Balaban, Art, Alan Arkin, Martin Sheen; Bright Eyes from the 1978 film of Watership Down; (below) Simon's olive branch; but he kept *Hearts And Bones*.

ART GARFUNKEL
Sings Bright Eyes
Watership Down

"I WAS MAKING THE BEST OF WHAT FATE





< Paul Simon felt Garfunkel's latest material lacked bite, however, and as he later told Billboard, that was why he had reappeared to offer him My Little Town, a "nasty" but non-autobiographical song about somebody "who hates the place he grew up in". The brand-new Simon & Garfunkel recording that subsequently emerged was sublime, gracing both *Breakaway* and Simon's attendant solo album *Still Crazy After All These Years*, and sparking a mini-reunion which saw the duo perform My Little Town, The Boxer and Scarborough Fair on Saturday Night Live that October. On the surface all seemed well.

"There I was making the best of what fate had handed me," says Garfunkel, "yet I was in this hugely disappointing position. You want to know how I felt about relating to what was left of our partnership, and to those old songs? I don't know what to say…"

Garfunkel trails off. There is a long silence, which he waits for MOJO to break.

Garfunkel's 1979 album, *Fate For Breakfast*, reached Number 2 in the UK, buoyed by the best-selling single of that year, Bright Eyes, as featured in Watership Down, Martin Rosen's film adaptation of Richard Adams' novel about a warren of rabbits journeying to a new home, and the trials they face upon arriving.

In the US, neither *Fate For Breakfast* nor Bright Eyes charted. Then, in June, while Garfunkel was in Vienna filming Nicolas Roeg's dark psychosexual thriller Bad Timing, he received some truly devastating news: his long-term actress girlfriend Laurie Bird had committed suicide at their Manhattan apartment.

"I was a mourner privately for two years," says Garfunkel. "I loved Laurie. I was stunned. Hurt. Stopped in life. I had my apartment off Central Park and I would read her diaries. It was a very tough experience and I fell in love with all great art. I would fly to Europe and take my motor scooter around and look at great architecture. I would listen to Bach and get his scores, the better to appreciate those phrases that dovetail. That was where I felt companionship. I didn't feel it in restaurants with friends."

When the singer did re-emerge, he did so on a grand scale. In September 1981, Simon & Garfunkel reformed for a free concert in Central Park. They played for over half-a-million people, and Garfunkel nailed his *pièce de résistance*, guiding Bridge Over Troubled Water to its extraordinary climax. As he stepped back from the mike at the song's close, he clenched his left fist in victory. "Yes, it did feel like Paul's heart was going out to me," he says of Simon's Central Park invitation. "It felt like he was saying, 'We can't leave Artie to waste away on his own – he's too useful.'"

He brightens, recalling "the thrilling rebirth of the Simon & Garfunkel experience", and the subsequent reunion tour, a "kick-start to reconnect to the world and not be home alone." It is perhaps the wrong time to mention the mooted Simon & Garfunkel reunion album which instead became Paul Simon's 1983 solo record *Hearts And Bones* after he ditched Garfunkel's vocals, but MOJO does and immediately regrets it.

"What else you got?" says Garfunkel sadly.

The Simon & Garfunkel reunion tours of 1993, 2004 and 2009 were anything but nostalgia act footnotes. Still, if concerts such as that at the Colosseum in Rome in 2004 – where, in a echo of Central Park, the duo played a free concert for over 600,000 people – demonstrated the enduring power of their extraordinary back

HAD HANDED TO ME.”

catalogue, there was often a tangible fragility to proceedings, Artie and Paul’s personal relationship still an awkward dance. When they sang Old Friends together, two men in their late sixties, it was Garfunkel’s arm that would find its way around Simon’s shoulder. “Yes, I’m warmer,” he says. “I’m tactile.”

It now seems pertinent to include a piece of Garfunkel’s poetry, dated June 2010, that he handed to me at the start of the interview.

> *“What is the singing voice to me? A name, a skill, or a flag I see?*
> *A certain thrill – the gift of glide,*
> *The ride on the cusp of emotion, uplift from the heart to the cords,*
> *Love for the song, for the sound.*
> *For four months the gift is gone.”*

Garfunkel’s voice deserted him in January 2010. His doctor said one of his two vocal cords had become stiff and enlarged, but he wasn’t able to explain why. Garfunkel says it wasn’t the ageing process or any sudden trauma; he cites the strain on his voice when Simon & Garfunkel toured Asia and Australia in 2009, this apparently down to Simon’s insistence on louder on-stage monitoring.

He’s ready, all the same, to tour with Simon again just as soon as his old sparring partner says the word. “I wouldn’t have been ready two years ago,” says Garfunkel, “but I’ve done 150 solo shows since then and now I can sing like Artie is supposed to again.”

And the love between Artie and Paul? Is it still there, deep down?

“Yeah, I love Paul Simon. I loved him since I met him. He’s got a very precious soul and my heart goes out to his real set of needs. He can be subterranean, and yet I feel a new Simon & Garfunkel album is just over there.” He points to a nearby flowerbed.

“It ain’t me, babe,” Garfunkel adds, opening his arms, smiling. “What you got for me, Paul? Where’s the fucking rehearsal for the next album?” Ⓜ

Getty Images (3), Rex

Building bridges again: the duo reunited in Central Park, NYC, September 1981; (bottom) Dodger Stadium, Los Angeles, August 1983.

HIGH ART

Mr Garfunkel chooses his five favourite vocal performances.

FOR EMILY, WHENEVER I MAY FIND HER

From: *Parsley, Sage, Rosemary And Thyme (Columbia, 1966)*

“It’s working with the painter’s brush when that brush is very fine. It opens up so nicely: ‘Oh I love you, girl.’ It’s almost too damn sugary, but that’s why it works. Paul wrote it brilliantly, because after the instrumental break it busts out from all that saccharine: ‘And when I awoke and felt you warm and near…’”

BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER

From: *Bridge Over Troubled Water (Columbia, 1970)*

“It’s two extremes, control and release. It was maddening how many takes it took to get what I wanted in that first verse, all as a set-up. The end is about going for it big-time and surprising yourself with your gumption. I did not know that I could sing so strong and so high and so extroverted. It’s a lesson for all people: try to out-do yourself.”

BARBARA ALLEN

From: *Angel Clare (Columbia, 1973)*

“When I listen to Barbara Allen I think, ‘Oh man! Were you blushingly crimson!’ Songs are different colours and that one is red, red. I’m doing so much breath control and the heart is way out on my sleeve. I’m not a rock’n’roller there at all – I’m a choirboy or a crooner. I give myself good credit for being so passionate.”

I ONLY HAVE EYES FOR YOU

From: *Breakaway (Columbia, 1975)*

“I remember playing it for James [Taylor] and Carly [Simon] in their Martha’s Vineyard house, and when I went (*singing*) ‘I only have eyes…’ Carly goes, ‘Mmm, nice eyes!’ I’m holding my notes nicely. I wanted to make it cushy and sexy. It’s seductive. It takes you from the dance floor to the bedroom.”

ART
GARFUNKEL

THE PROMISE

From: *Lefty (Columbia, 1988)*

“I was moved by the wonderful lyric that Nick Holmes wrote. I sing it in the baritone range and it’s heartfelt and I like the way it conveys maturity in love: ‘The continents get seven seas/Boy gets girl, and all you got was me/with The Promise/I’d try to be honest.’ It’s tender and lovely.”

As told to James McNair

DEGENERATION X

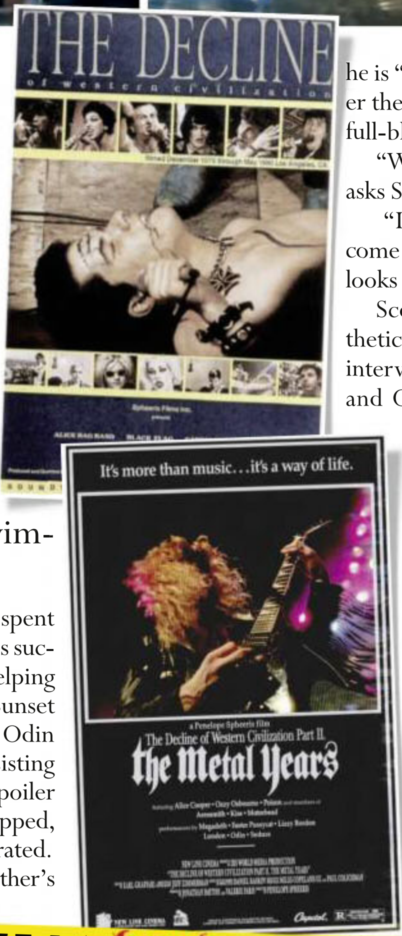
Between 1981 and 1998 PENELOPE SPHEERIS documented LA youth culture in three crazed films called THE DECLINE OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION. Then the films disappeared. Now, they're back. PHELIM O'NEILL spoke to the director about the greatest rock doc trilogy of all time.

Portrait by EBET ROBERTS

SOMETIMES YOU NEED a little distance. On a typically dry, hot late summer Hollywood night in 1987, as 41-year-old film director Penelope Spheeris looked through the viewfinder of her camera at the drunken figure of 29-year-old W.A.S.P. bassist Chris Holmes, lying on a floating recliner chair in his mother's swimming pool, she was nearly in tears.

The bassist for the West Coast shock-rockers had spent the evening downtown, lending moral support to his less successful flatmate, Odin singer Randy O, and quietly helping himself to the plentiful, cheap booze laid on for the Sunset Strip glam-metal hopefuls. Spheeris had interviewed Odin simmering in hot tubs, draped with groupies, and insisting with unwavering fervour they were going to make it. (Spoiler alert: they didn't.) When the Odin interview finally wrapped, late into the night, Holmes was, to put it mildly, obliterated.

So the film crew schlepped him across town to his mother's house, plonked him on the recliner in the family pool (the only way to keep him close to upright) and rolled the cameras. "When we shot that I thought we got nothing," recalls Spheeris today. "I took the cameraman aside, and I remember standing behind a tree almost crying, going, We didn't get it, what're we going to do? We don't have enough money to film it over again. And it turns out it was the most talked about piece in the film."


THE DECLINE
of western civilization
It's more than music…it's a way of life.
a Penelope Spheeris film
The Decline of Western Civilization Part II
the Metal Years

Today you can see why. It's not so much an interview as a slow-motion souring of the West Coast rock'n'roll dream. At first the footage seems hilarious. Then proceedings turn increasingly grim. A drunken Holmes claims, unconvincingly, that he is "the happiest son of a bitch and motherfucker there ever was", then declares himself to be "a full-blown alcoholic".

"What will you be doing 10 years from now?" asks Spheeris.

"I'll probably be dead," slurs Holmes. "You come see my graveyard." Sat poolside, his mother looks on, trying her hardest to look unfazed.

Scenes like this, and similarly excessive, bathetic moments such as Kiss's Paul Stanley being interviewed in bed with a trio of glamour models and Ozzy Osbourne in leopard-print dressing gown shakily attempting to make breakfast in his Hollywood kitchen (and spilling orange juice over the counter-top) made the movie a cult VHS rental hit and early '90s tour-bus fixture.

"[Paul] took me aside and said he didn't think the girls I got were very pretty so he called the Playboy Mansion and got three different girls," says Spheeris, happy to reveal some of the film's stage-managed secrets. "And we did fake [Ozzy's] orange juice spill, I will admit to that."

"THE LA hardcore scene WAS STILL A SECRET. THIS WAS HISTORICAL STUFF KICKING OFF."

The documentary should have become as much a part of '80s metal cinema history as Rob Reiner's This Is Spinal Tap or Heavy Metal Parking Lot, but in the late '90s it vanished, failing to make the jump to DVD and falling through the cultural cracks, along with Parts I and III of her Decline Of Western Civilization trilogy.

Spheeris directed Wayne's World in 1992, followed by well-paid but unsatisfying gigs helming unwanted '90s big screen revamps of The Beverly Hillbillies and The Little Rascals.

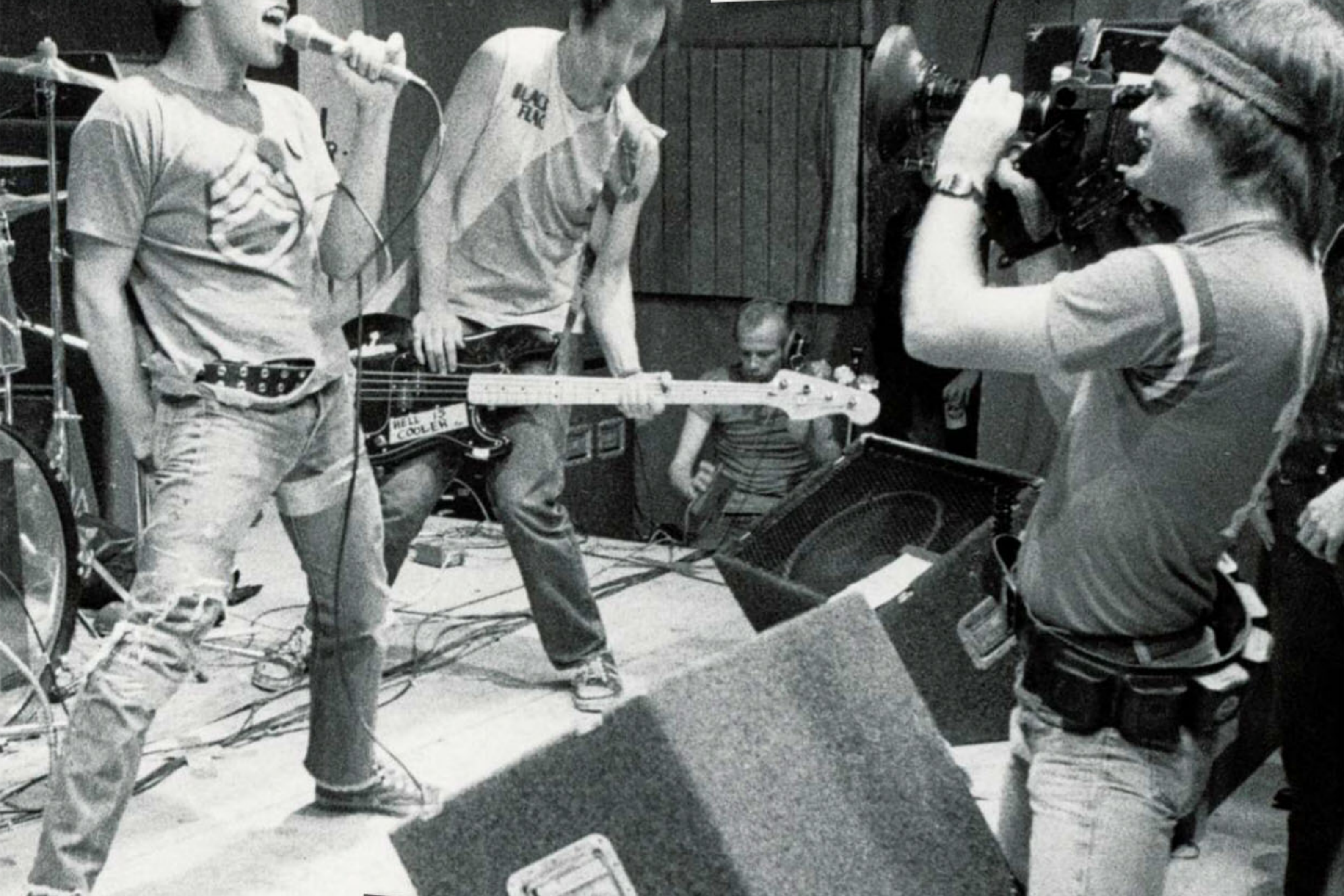
Most assumed the Decline movies, and Metal Years in particular, disappeared because of the non-clearance of music rights. Most were wrong. "There's not a legal issue," says Spheeris. "I was [just] lazy and a chickenshit for not doing it. I've held it as a burden for 20 years. I hate to refer to it that way, but it never went away for a moment, so many people asking for it and me knowing that it had to be done but intuitively I knew it was a monster amount of work. I would never have done it if my daughter Anna hadn't put a gun to my head."

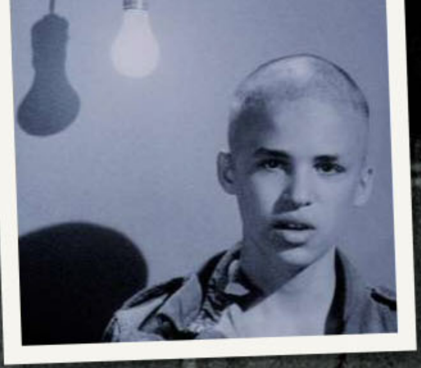
But rather than put out a bare bones DVD of The Decline Of Western Civilization Part II: The Metal Years, Spheeris is releasing all of her Decline films in a box set, bringing together a three-part LA music saga that started back in 1978 when, as a 32-year-old film school graduate, disillusioned with rock'n'roll in the disco era, Spheeris started seeing punk bands like The Germs play LA clubs such as the Starwood.

"I went, Wow I gotta do something about this," remembers Spheeris. "I think it had a lot to do with purely tearing down the tradition of rock'n'roll, like no love songs, no guitar solos, no more than three chords." ➤

Gene genie: Kiss's main man Simmons and young friends.

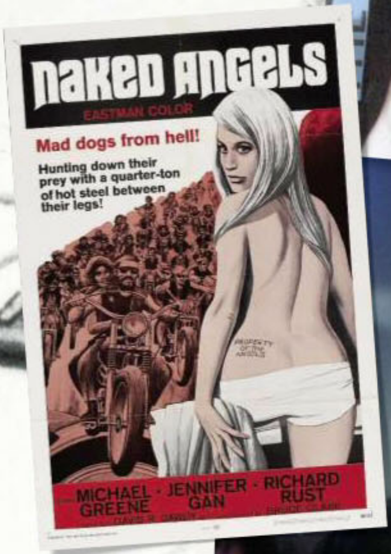
Rex


BLACK FLAG
HELL IS COOLER

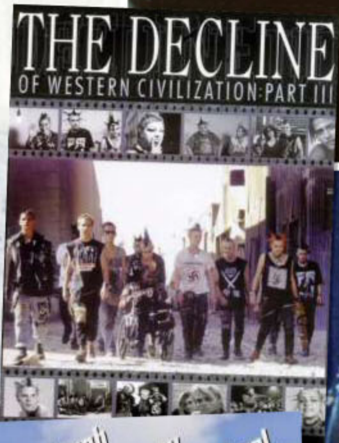


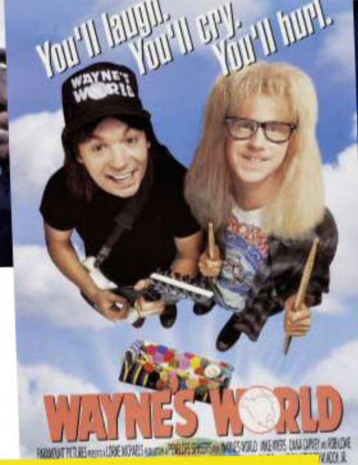
Reyes above: Black Flag in The Deline Of Civilization I with Ron Reyes on vocals and Chuck Dukowski on bass; (left) 14-year-old punk fan Eugene Tatu in Decline I; (below) Odin's Randy O; (opposite page, top row) W.A.S.P.'s Chris Holmes, not waving but… as he relaxes. Mum sits poolside.

THE GERMS
"CATS CLAUSE"


NAKED ANGELS
EASTMAN COLOR
Mad dogs from hell!
Hunting down their prey with a quarter-ton of hot steel between their legs!
PROPERTY OF THE ANGELS
MICHAEL GREENE · JENNIFER GAN · RICHARD RUST

Street first: David 'Eyeball' Skinner of The Resistance (standing) with fellow squatterpunk in Decline III; (right, from top) Poison's Bret Michaels from Metal Years; Billy Zoom of X in the first film; (bottom) Ozzy Osbourne at home, mid breakfast.




You'll laugh. You'll cry. You'll hurl.
WAYNE'S WORLD

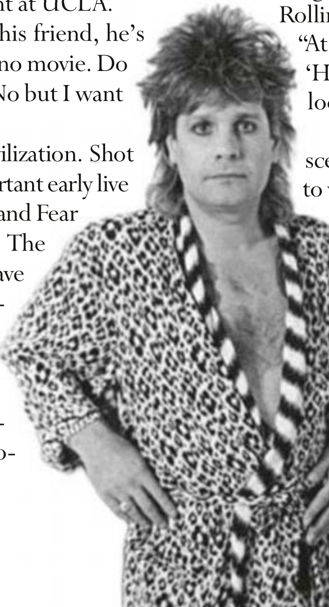
THE DAUGHTER OF AN ABSENTEE CIRCUS STRONGman Greek immigrant father and a sideshow ticket-taker mother, Spheeris had graduated UCLA's film programme (BA in Film 1969, Master Of Fine Arts in Theatre Studies, '73) with realistic job goals of script supervisor or editor. But anything further up the professional ladder was a rare achievement for women at the dawn of the 1970s. There were a few bit-part acting roles in movies like 1969 biker flick Naked Angels, while a further couple of years were spent directing and editing Richard Pryor's never-seen political satire Uncle Tom's Fairy Tales: The Movie For Homosexuals. "I think Bill Cosby has it in his closet," says Spheeris, "along with a few other things."

> "I DIDN'T BUY INTO THE HUMOUR OF *Metal Years* AT ALL. I DIDN'T WANT TO MAKE FUN OF THESE PEOPLE."

A brief career as a producer on Albert Brooks's short comedy films for Saturday Night Live ended after a difficult experience working on the comedian's ahead-of-its-time 1979 reality TV spoof, Real Life. So Spheeris reluctantly returned to directing. The financing came via her job as a teaching assistant at UCLA.

"One of my students said to me, 'I've got this friend, he's got some extra money and he wants to do a porno movie. Do you want to do a porno movie?' And I'm like, No but I want to do a punk rock movie."

The result was The Decline Of Western Civilization. Shot from 1979-80, Decline captured exciting, important early live footage of key LA punk bands like Black Flag, X and Fear at a time when the scene was still underground. The hardcore bands filled the void left by LA's new wave pop-punk bands like The Dickies and The Go-Go's as they left in search of global success. By focusing on one area and one group of fans, including future Foo Fighter Pat Smear – then guitarist for The Germs – the film had a personality and intimacy absent from most contemporary US music documentaries.



"The movie is kind of like what just one weekend might have been like," explains Eugene Tatu, who appeared in the film as an intense, shaven-headed 14-year-old punk fan. "This scene you see in this movie was [still a] secret [back then]. At a lot of these shows I just knew that I was witnessing some historical stuff kicking off."

Spheeris, then in her early thirties, could put bands and fans at ease. "Well, I've actually been accused of giving them drugs and alcohol. That's not true. When I did the first Decline, I kind of remember bringing a six-pack of beer, over to X's house. But they had the heroin," she jokes. "I kind of like to not act all uptight, just turn the camera on."

Rightfully lauded now, with the likes of Dave Grohl and Henry Rollins singing its praises, not everyone saw its value at the time. "At my very first screening this woman stood up and she goes, 'How dare you glorify these heathens.' There were people who looked at it as if I had done something wrong."

The film may also have inadvertently helped accelerate the scene's demise, putting names to faces, and alerting the LAPD to what bands to look out for and where to find them. LA Police Chief Daryl Gates even called for the film to be banned from any LA county screenings.

SEVEN YEARS LATER LOS ANGELES HAD changed beyond all recognition. Glam metal had taken over the city. Spheeris had continued to chronicle the city's strange cultural shifts in such early feature films as 1983's Suburbia and 1985's brilliantly bleak teen crime drama The Boys Next Door and this new scene was impossible to ignore, even invading her

Getty Images

home life; her then 17-year-old daughter, Anna Spheeris Fox, was dating Mötley Crüe bass beast Nikki Sixx.

"He told everyone I was 15, what a perv," Anna tells MOJO. "He wrote a song about it, it's on the *Girls, Girls Girls* album, it's ridiculous." The track, All In The Name Of…, opens with the thankfully inaccurate line, "She's only 15."

At night the streets were packed with heavily made-up, bouffant-haired young men and women in leather and lace, drunkenly handing out flyers and hustling tickets for the latest pay-to-play club show.

"We basically lived like that for a few years," remembers Shawn Duncan, then drummer for Metal Years stars Odin. "The whole scene was just non stop." Managed by the late Bill Gazzarri, who ran famed Sunset Strip nightclub Gazzarri's, Odin became the butt of many Metal Years comic highlights: introduced by a white fedora'd Gazzarri ("these guys are personal friends of mine"), with a feeble audience chant of "Odin, Odin, Odin…", Randy O hopscotches onto the stage in a pair of ass-less leather chaps. Currently the drummer with LA metal veterans Bulletboys, Shawn Duncan has no regrets: "I can't tell you how many fellow musicians I have met who get a big grin on their face when they meet me and find out the Odin connection. It is almost always followed up with, 'Wow, Odin, that's fuckin' cool'."

Metal Years is undeniably funny, but its humour escaped Spheeris at the time. "I was just taking it seriously," she says today. "I didn't really buy into the humour of it, that's why I turned down [directing] Spinal Tap. I didn't want to make fun of these people. I didn't try to be funny, at all. I just showed them as they were. I guess that it was funny helped out, because I got Wayne's World after that."

Spheeris's success brought her further into the mainstream. Her 1996 Chris Farley comedy Black Sheep couldn't have seemed further from the edgy sensibilities of The Boys Next Door or 1987's punk western road movie Dudes. But in the wake of Black Sheep came the film Spheeris is most proud of, the one we never got to see: The Decline Of Western Civilization Part III. "It didn't get distribution," explains Spheeris. "That's another reason why the films didn't get out there because I couldn't get the Decline III distributed unless I gave up the rights for I and II. So I just held onto 'em."

By the late '90s the punk rock of the first movie had mutated into the softer pop-punk of bands like Green Day and Blink 182. The bands in Decline III, such as Final Conflict and Litmus Green, are defiantly underground. This is punk at its most angry, musically limited and uncommercial, played by kids who'd immediately alienate their small fanbase if they ever signed to a major label. Whereas the first Decline film was chiefly about bands, Part III is pointedly about the fans. If '80s hardcore punk was a challenge to the world, here it has become a protective shield for the fans, the homeless 'gutter punk' street kids of Hollywood. These weren't teenagers who changed into their punk gear at evenings and weekends. For them it was all they had, forming an important, often life-saving bond between them and their friends.

"I just have a soft part in my heart for them," says Spheeris. "That's because they're really good people, good-hearted people. Sometimes when people get really damaged like that, they react in a way that makes them more caring."

Making Decline III moved Spheeris to take part in LA's fostering programme and she hopes that, 18 years after the film was made, it will do some good. "Of all the reasons for this DVD to come out now, for me the best reason is that people could see Decline III and maybe treat their children better."

"This is a punk film that doesn't require the viewer to be punk," explains David 'Eyeball" Skinner, lead singer of The Resistance, the only squatter punk band in the movie that were actually living on the streets at the time. "It allows insight into a world seen by very few, even within the punk scene at large."

Viewed as a trilogy – with plenty of supplementary material such as extended interviews, commentaries, never before seen live performances, and laudatory analysis from the likes of Grohl and Rollins – the films all benefit from being compared and contrasted at such close proximity. Geographically we never stray from a few square miles in California, but through the years 1981-98 Spheeris's study covers plenty of emotional ground and never feels like ancient history. We see the urgency and innovation of early punk, the more comically apathetic star-lust of the glam era followed by the desperation of life on the streets. It's all relatable, often quite moving. Throughout, Spheeris captures events and people honestly, with a candidness that is impossible to think of being accomplished now.

"It's different these days, people are a lot more guarded," says Spheeris. "I was fortunate I shot it when I did. It was before the technology made a difference."

There's no suggestion of another Decline movie in Spheeris's life. It's not just the hassle of dealing with bands and sorting out rights and clearances. For Spheeris, the main stumbling block is more obvious: "The fact that there isn't a subject to focus on. That's the big one. What are you going to do? What is so groundbreaking right now that deserves it?"

THAT'LL BE THE DAY

Five more music films we'd like to see get the deluxe DVD reissue treatment.

EAT THE DOCUMENT

(Bob Dylan, 1966)

Commissioned and then canned by America's ABC TV network, Dylan's Dadaist diary of his 1966 world tour (shot in colour by D.A. Pennebaker and Howard Alk) is a mesmeric example of the psychic rock doc as the '66 tour fractures under Dylan's wired speed-fuelled paranoia.

THE BEATLES "Let it be"
APPLE
TECHNICOLOR

LET IT BE

(Michael Lindsay-Hogg, 1970)

Hogg positioned cameras where the band wouldn't see them making this one of the most important music films ever, a silent witness to the end of an era and collapse of the most significant pop band of the 20th century. Unavailable for 45 years.

COCKSUCKER BLUES

(Robert Frank and Daniel Seymour, 1972)

Frank's bug-on-the-wall chronicle of the Stones' 1972 US tour is both hypnotically boring and deeply unsettling; a compelling Warholian document of on-the-road vanity and ennui and its grimy perils.

CRACKED ACTOR

(Alan Yentob, 1975)

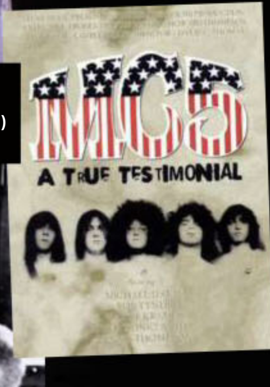
This film tracks a "fragile, exhausted, and undernourished" David Bowie on his Diamond Dogs US tour, "addicted, lost and looking for a way out", Yentob told MOJO in 2013. It inspired Nicolas Roeg to cast Bowie in The Man Who Fell To Earth. Still no legitimate release.

MC5: A TRUE TESTIMONIAL

(David C. Thomas, 2002)

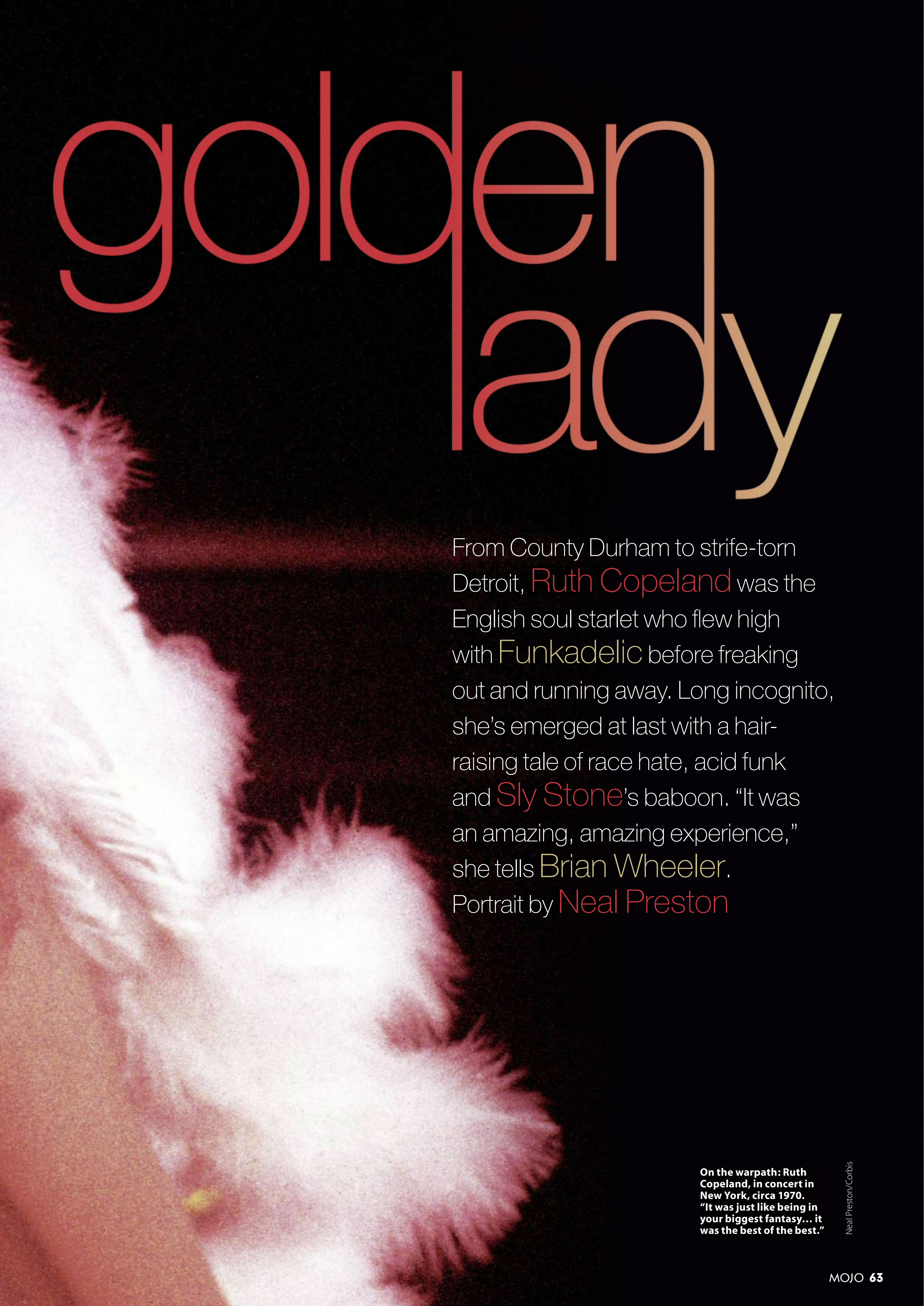
Seven years in the making, it revived the reputation of a misremembered band, with its wealth of unseen footage and moving interviews, and set the standard for all future rock-docs. The most exciting recent stand-alone single-band document is still unavailable thanks to a royalties wrangle.

Road movies: Bowie cracks, Jagger (below) snaps.



golden lady

From County Durham to strife-torn Detroit, Ruth Copeland was the English soul starlet who flew high with Funkadelic before freaking out and running away. Long incognito, she's emerged at last with a hair-raising tale of race hate, acid funk and Sly Stone's baboon. "It was an amazing, amazing experience," she tells Brian Wheeler. Portrait by Neal Preston



On the warpath: Ruth Copeland, in concert in New York, circa 1970. "It was just like being in your biggest fantasy... it was the best of the best."

Neal Preston/Corbis

“IT WAS THE HOUSE THAT MAMAS & THE PAPAS used to live in,” remembers Ruth Copeland, her long-dormant Durham accent still audible beneath a Detroit drawl. “And the pool house… somebody had been practising black magic down there. There were books by Aleister Crowley and… just weird stuff. The water was green and there were *things* floating on it. It was very bad. And Zsa Zsa Gabor lived, like, next door. And the whole place was in uproar because there would be all kinds of partying…”

Copeland lets out a throaty laugh and plumps up her cushion. The late afternoon sun casts a mellow glow over New York's Chinatown four floors below, but there's no time to gaze out of the window. Any initial wariness the former soul starlet had about being interviewed, after nearly four decades out of the spotlight, evaporated hours ago. There are too many stories to tell, about how a white girl from the north-east of England ended up on ground-breaking records with Funkadelic. And this one, about the time she was living in a Bel Air mansion with Sly Stone.

“I wasn't his girlfriend. He would bring other women and he would shoot at them sometimes. There was one girl tried to get out of there and he was shooting at her out the window.”

A memory pops into Copeland's head that seems to sum up the ambience Chez Sly better than any other.

“He had a baboon,” she announces. “And that baboon… poor thing. It wasn't treated properly.”

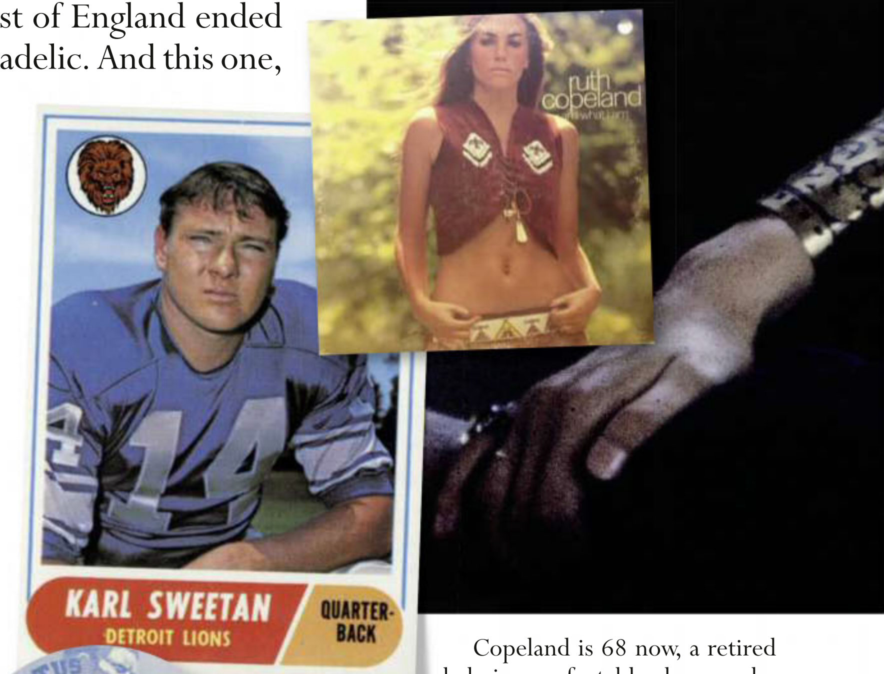
One day the unfortunate primate got on the wrong side of Sly's pit bull terrier, Gun, with sadly predictable results.

“I saw Earthie, the baboon, lying on the ground in Gun's cage and Sly said, ‘Oh, he's sleeping’. I said, That baboon is not sleeping. I had to go down with a broomstick and get Gun on the end of the broomstick. So he clamped onto it. And I had him at one end and I was pulling the monkey out with the other… That was how insane it was.”

The last time the world took a long look at Ruth Copeland she was done up in a skimpy leather squaw outfit, staring defiantly from the cover of her 1971 album *I Am What I Am*. It was the peak of her musical odyssey, a funky rock stew powered by Parliament-Funkadelic man Eddie Hazel's howling guitars.

JERRY ROSS
and his Orchestra

The story of Ruth: Copeland in reflective mood, Greenwich Village, circa 1970; (insets, from top) with Jerry Ross And His Orchestra, “like a bad high school band”; her *I Am What I Am* album; first husband Karl Sweetan; her 1967 Carla B-side I Need Him, a Northern soul favourite; the Detroit riots of that year; a baboon, though not Sly's.



INVICTUS
INV 513
THE SILENT BOATMAN
PARLIAMENT

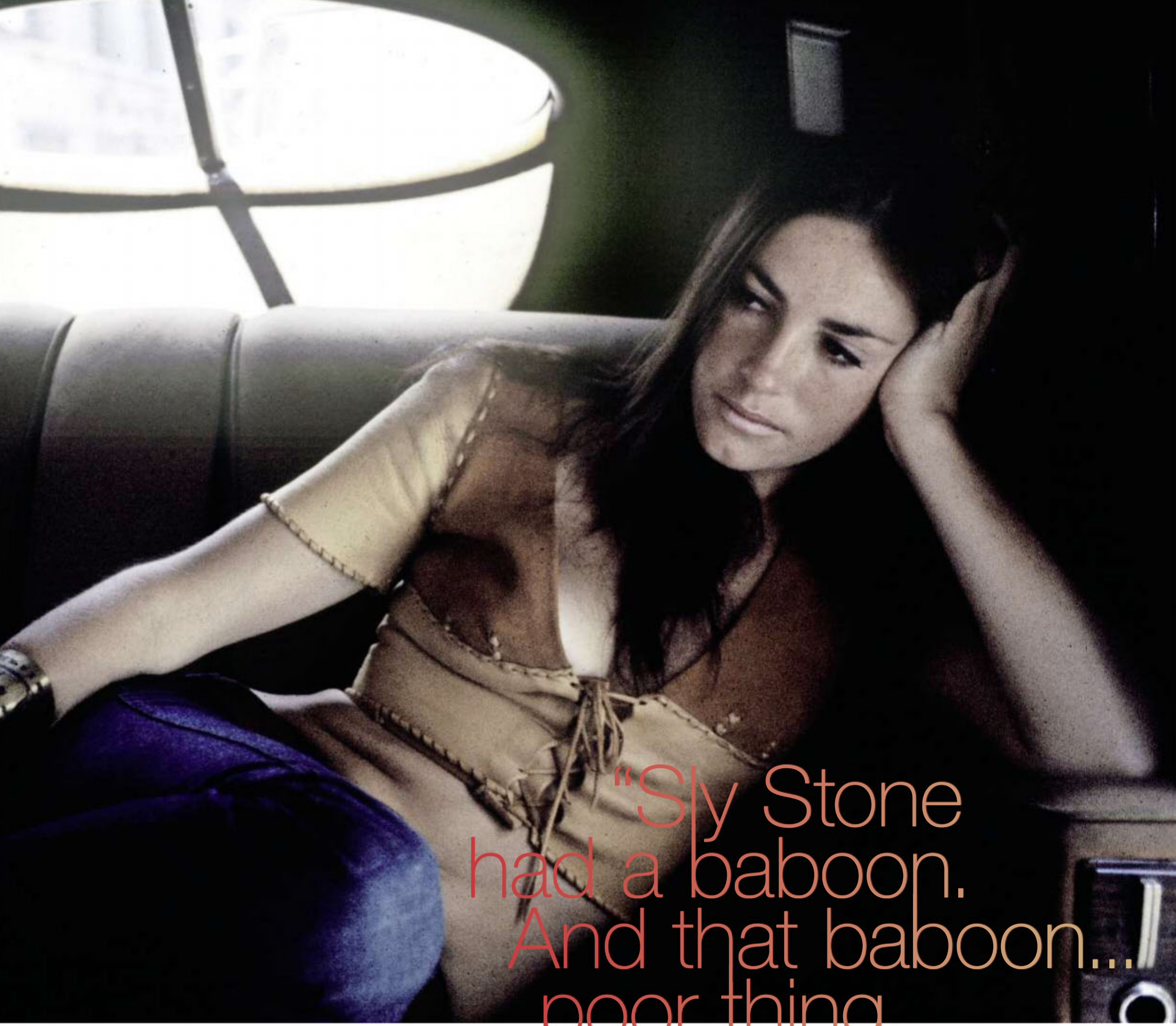
Copeland is 68 now, a retired lady in comfortable shoes and a cardigan, her wild years safely stowed with her memorabilia. She had seemed initially reluctant to revisit them – “I am not sure I want to be discovered,” she told me. But with George Clinton, her old songwriting partner and mentor, currently ubiquitous, it feels like the right time to restore Copeland's prominence in the sprawling P-Funk annals. It might be the most extraordinary entry of all.

ECONOMY BARBER

COPELAND'S STORY BEGINS IN THE PUBS AND working men's clubs of her native Consett, County Durham, where she sang Beatles covers with a local band, Ed & The Intruders. Her mother, Emma, had been an amateur singer with big bands but had settled for the life of a hospital cleaner. Ruth left school at 16 and, like so many others in Consett, went to work at the local iron and steel works, feeding punch cards into a primitive computer. But when her mother died suddenly in 1963, it refuelled Ruth's “burning desire” to get out of “confined” Consett and make something of herself. An exit offered itself when her older sister, Norma, emigrated to Detroit, home to the Motown music Ruth loved.

“My dad got married again and that was it,”

Neal Preston/Corbis, courtesy of Ruth Copeland, Getty Images, Alamy



"Sly Stone had a baboon. And that baboon… poor thing. It wasn't treated properly."

says Copeland. "I didn't have to be the housewife and, gee, I mean who wouldn't want to go? I begged my sister to help me to get over there."

When Ruth arrived in the Motor City in April 1965, she was able to use her steel works experience to get a job in the computer room at the General Motors plant, and there was an early foray onto the Detroit music scene, "playing golf clubs for the Martini set" with Jerry Ross And His Orchestra: "sort of like a bad high school band," she shrugs, "only worse."

Like Consett, Detroit was a blue-collar town. Unlike Consett, race was an issue, and when riots erupted across the city in the summer of 1967, there was shooting outside Copeland's house on Livernois Avenue. By now, she'd secured a regular gig with her own band at Gino's Falcon Showbar, a "Mafia hangout" on the East Side, and in late 1967, she cut a single, Foggy Days/I Need Him, for black DJ and producer Ollie McLaughlin's Carla label under the stage name Kelly Michaels. It was in Gino's that she met Karl Sweetan, the starting quarterback of the Detroit Lions football team, a pack of "party animals" who would pile into the club on a Monday night to blow off steam after Sunday's game. Soon after, they married.

"I was 18 years old, virginal," says Copeland. "I had a lot of heart but I didn't have any experience. He sort of swept me off my feet."

The abusive union lasted all of six weeks, although it would take her a further year to fully extricate herself. Amid the trauma, Copeland stumbled on a lifeline. She was singing with her latest band, The Naked Lunch, in the Duchess Lounge on Van Dyke when Motown hitmaker Edwin Starr sat in on a version of A Whiter Shade Of Pale.

"He sang the shit out of it," she recalls. "Then he went back to Motown and told Jeffrey Bowen about me. And then a couple of nights later this guy comes in and he looks very hip. With the big afro and gold glasses. Very Black Panthery."

Bowen was a senior Motown executive who was secretly putting together a breakaway label, Invictus, with Berry Gordy's star songwriting team, Holland-Dozier-Holland. He offered to be Ruth's manager and they started dating.

A mixed-race couple in a divided city caused heads to turn. Copeland remembers having to "scrunch down" below the dashboard of Bowen's Cadillac when they drove through black neighbourhoods. One night, when they attended a political fundraising event together, Copeland was talking to a middle-aged white man when he clocked her companion: "He just looked at me and he said, 'Ugh!,' and he threw his whiskey sour in my face and all ➢

FREDA PAYNE
BAND OF GOLD

down my dress." Copeland is still outraged at the memory. "I just fought my way through that whole period."

COPELAND SIGNED to Invictus and right away was gifted a shot at chart success when asked to write lyrics for the Holland-Dozier-Holland tune that would become Band Of Gold. "I sat with it night after night at my sister's house and I wrote a song about my dog, in England…" She sings a snatch of this forgotten classic: "Genie was the best friend that I ever had."

"Holland-Dozier-Holland said, 'What? You can't write a hit song about a *dog*!' I was terrified to touch any of their tracks after that."

Band Of Gold was given to Freda Payne, with a less canine-centric Ron Dunbar lyric, and focus returned to Copeland's music. Bowen had hired Funkadelic – keyboard virtuoso Bernie Worrell, Billy 'Bass' Nelson, guitar prodigy Eddie Hazel, drummer Tiki Fulwood and rhythm guitarist Tawl Ross – to back her on her debut album. They'd just released the first Funkadelic album on the Westbound label but George Clinton had simultaneously signed them to Invictus to record a more pop-oriented album as Parliament.

She clicked immediately with Clinton's young band, contributing ideas, backing vocals and songs, including The Silent Boatman, a gospel-tinged meditation on death – featuring a snatch of the Skye Boat Song played on bagpipes – that made it onto Parliament's *Osmium* debut. But Copeland's production credit on the album is usually dismissed as a front for Bowen.

"It was really an entangled web," she explains. "Because, believe me, I sat at that control board every day for that record. And I mixed it and helped mix it and helped write those things. And I don't think Jeffrey was able to put his name on anything at the time because he was still signed with Motown. Yes, my name was put on it, but I was just as involved with it as he was."

For Copeland, it was a crash course in the music business, good and bad. "I was just trying to absorb it all," she says. "It was just like being in your biggest fantasy. You know, it was the best of the best. I was spoiled for life because these guys could play."

In spite of their prodigious LSD consumption?

"Whatever George ingested didn't have any effect on him," Copeland insists. "He was always just so up and full of beans and life and energy and music. I never saw him play an instrument. But he would pull everything together. He was a great producer."

Her solo album from the sessions, 1970's *Self Portrait*, is an odd mix of styles – slick, Motown-influenced pop, Northumbrian-accented folk on opening prologue Child Of The North, guitar-driven proto-funk on Clinton co-write I Got A Thing For You Daddy, and even, on final track Un Bel Di – which featured the Detroit Symphony Orchestra – opera. Copeland explains how Bowen would hand her a song title or a backing track recorded by Billy Bass and Eddie Hazel, and tell her to come up with a melody and lyrics. He even ordered her to paint a self-portrait for the album's cover.

"Jeffrey was very much a pupil of Berry Gordy's," she says. "He was trying to *create* me. Which is why I punched the bag. I fought against that. Which is why the second album is totally different."

I AM WHAT I AM, RECORDED WITH THE SAME GROUP OF musicians and featuring epic, self-lacerating versions of two Rolling Stones songs, Gimme Shelter and Play With Fire, was the product of nearly two years of solid touring, often as a support act

Parliament in session: including Billy Bass (far left), Tawl Ross (with specs), Eddie Hazel (seated), Tiki Fulwood (in helmet); (right) partner Jeffrey Bowen; (top right) Band Of Gold, almost a dog's ditty.

CARLA RECORDS
I NEED HIM
KELLY MICHAELS

ruth's records

I Need Him

as Kelly Michaels

(Carla B-side, 1967)

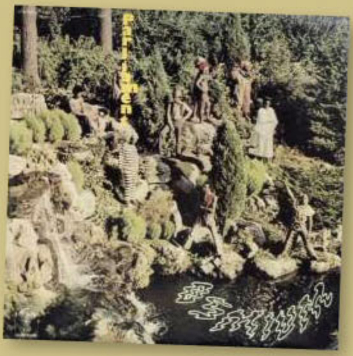
A Northern soul nugget penned by Grant Higgins and backed with Byrdsian jangle, this is an early glimpse of Copeland hitting a note of desperation a more decorous singer might miss. The B-side of Foggy Days, an original 45 could put you back £100s.

Osmium

with Parliament

(Invictus album, 1970)

Yet to locate the R&B USP that would demarcate Parliament from Funkadelic, this is a mad mélange of an album, with Copeland's unabashed writing in evidence on risqué Little Ole Country Boy and the kookily morbid The Silent Boatman.



Self Portrait

Ruth Copeland

(Invictus album, 1970)

This slightly bonkers mix of styles opens with the autobiographical Beatle-folk of Child Of The North and peaks with the erotic funk-rock of I Got A Thing For You Daddy. Conclusion: the more Funkadelic, the better.

I Am What I Am

Ruth Copeland

(Invictus album, 1971)

See what we mean? Copeland's best record unleashes the full power of her band on smouldering Stones covers and, best of all, Don't You Wish You Had (What You Had When You Had It?), with guitarist Eddie Hazel *in excelsis*.

Take Me To Baltimore

Ruth Copeland

(RCA album, 1976)

Her ship had sailed and the slickness of this Brecker Brothers-featuring album didn't help, but her distinctively schizoid combination of saltiness and vulnerability is still evident on touching Daryl Hall duet, Heaven.

Getty Images (3), courtesy of Phil Smee

> "Whatever George Clinton ingested didn't have any effect on him."

to Sly & The Family Stone. Billed under her own name, Copeland was effectively fronting Funkadelic after the original line-up fell out with Clinton over money. "After all the bullshit around the break-up of Funkadelic, we were treated like real rock stars when we hooked up with Ruth," remembers Billy 'Bass' Nelson.

The shows were wild. Copeland would fly in over the head of the crowd dressed as Superwoman. The Funks would be half-naked, wearing diapers or underwear painted blue.

"They looked really kind of scary," laughs Copeland. "At least to the white people in the audience!"

One night in Chicago, after two standing ovations she introduced the band – "Do you know who these guys are? Funkadelic!" – a move that did not go down well with headliner Sly. There were growing tensions with Bowen, too.

"I didn't have any real white friends that wanted to be around me and Jeffrey. And Jeffrey's black friends didn't really want to be around me," says Copeland. "It was very tense. We were very isolated, Jeff and I. We were like a train that was just going to run off the tracks."

It all came to a head in a bizarre incident at Madison Square Garden in September 1971, when Bowen got into a 30-minute stand-off with a white security guard who refused to let Copeland drive up a ramp onto the stage in a taxi.

"I was hysterical. And I went right on and did the show. It was awful. I was in front of 25,000 people and I was having a nervous breakdown. This was like the biggest night of my life. And Jeffrey was behind the speakers yelling, 'What the fuck is wrong with you?'"

The next week passed in a blur. Copeland flew to Las Vegas for a wedding ceremony with Bowen but the relationship was already beyond repair. The break-up, when it came, also spelled the end of her recording career with Invictus. Penniless, homeless and locked into a contract that prevented her from recording for anyone else, she took 'refuge' with Sly Stone in Los Angeles – baboons, black magic and all.

"I was in awe of his music. And, living with him, he was very kind to me," she says. "I ended up falling for him. I think everybody fell for Sly. Even the men. You know, you just did. He was very magnetic."

Copeland would eventually return to the stage in the autumn of 1972, when she was given support slots on David Bowie's first US tour as a reward for persuading her sceptical agent at William Morris that Bowie was the future of rock'n'roll after she'd returned from a trip back to the UK with a copy of *Hunky Dory*. But the shows did not go well. She had wanted to get Funkadelic back on board but, she says, "Jeffrey had them locked away."

She would have one more tilt at stardom, with the 1976 RCA album *Take Me To Baltimore*, which featured a duet with rising star Daryl Hall, but it received underwhelming reviews and sank without a trace.

Copeland was in bad shape by now – dependent on alcohol and amphetamines and filled with rage at the way she had been treated by the industry and the men in her life. She tortured herself about the "stupid" business decisions she had made, "signing anything that was put in front of me", and what might have been had she been able to stay with Invictus and fulfil her true potential with Funkadelic.

In her darkest hour, holed up in New Jersey with a "petty thug" she'd met in a club who'd promised to get her career back on track, she found herself staring at a loaded revolver on the bedside table, wondering whether she should blow her brains out. "I was looking in the mirror and I thought, Who's going to clean the rug? And then I thought, You don't really want to kill yourself if you're thinking about the rug."

IT'S NOW DARK IN NEW YORK AND WAY past the time we had planned to stop for dinner. Copeland's hotel room is still as she falls silent for the first time in hours. She has waited a long time to tell her story.

In the early 1980s, she made a clean break from the music business and built an entirely new life for herself as a strait-laced production executive at a publishing firm. It was not a difficult decision to make.

"By the time I decided to drop out of sight, I was broke, brokenhearted and drinking enough to sink a ship," she explains. "I was trying to be there for my husband and son and I knew if I kept on the way I was going, I would lose them. I needed help and I got it."

She has been happily married to Robert, a writer and editor, for 38 years and has a grown-up son. Yet she remains rightly proud of what she achieved with "the Funks" and speaks with almost maternal warmth about George Clinton, Billy Bass and the others.

"They respected my talent," she says, "and I respected their talent. We were compadres."

When 1997 rolled around and Parliament-Funkadelic were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Copeland wasn't asked.

"It only bothered me when Billy said, 'You know Ruth, I told them you should have been in there,'" she says. "And that bothered me. I thought, maybe…"

These days she tends to keep her distance from her past, partly out of fear of being tempted into old ways, but mostly because she's made her peace with it. Before she flies back to her home in rural Illinois we have dinner in the hotel and retire to neighbouring rooms. As MOJO turns in for the night, the soft wail of Copeland's blues harmonica can be heard drifting through the wall.

"It was an amazing, amazing life experience," she told me earlier, with a twinkle in her eye. "I lived more in my life in two months in my twenties than most people get to live in their entire lives." Ⓜ

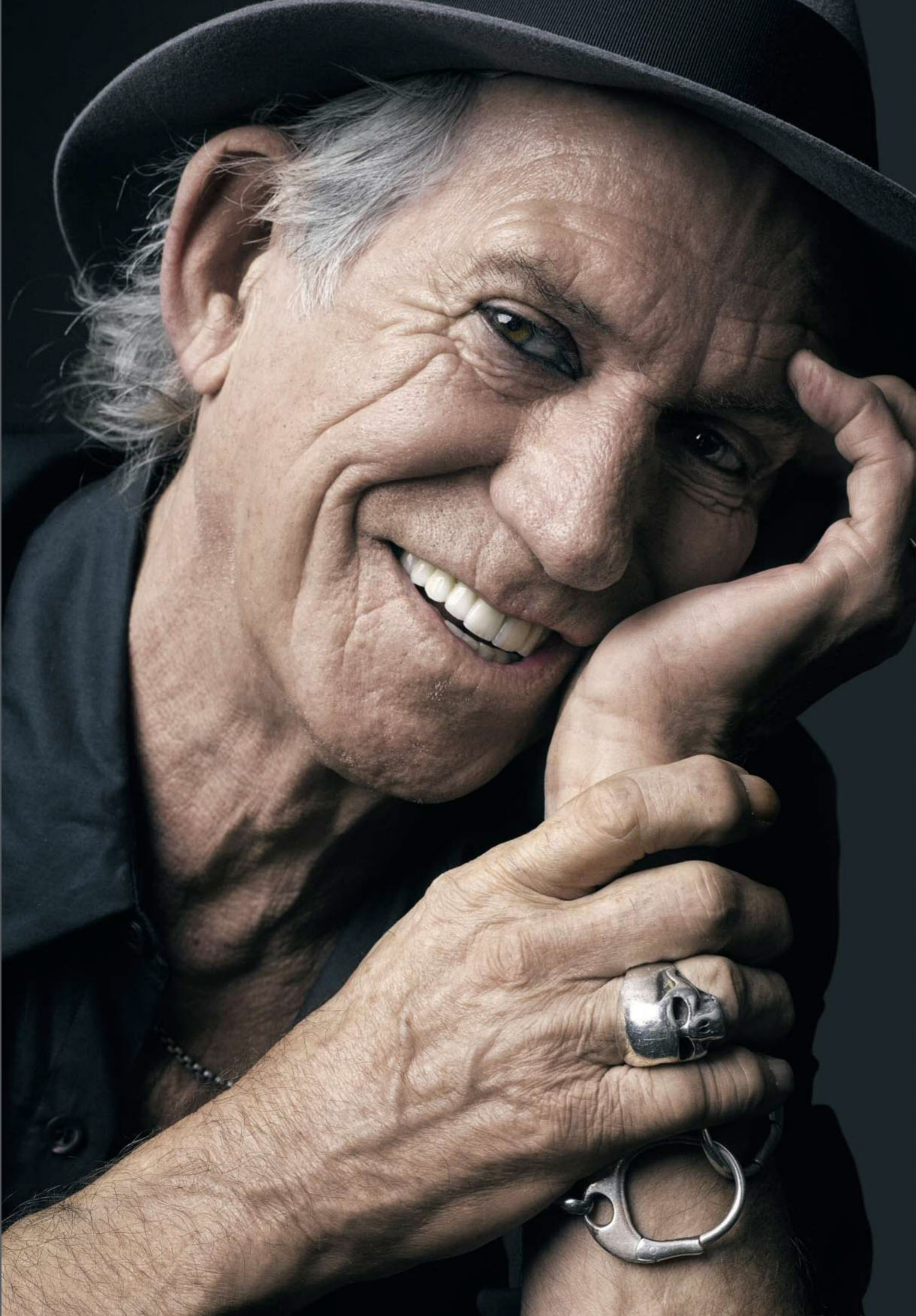
"she had that raw energy!"

Ruth Copeland, by her mentor, George Clinton

"Ruth Copeland was a real good artist. At that time, rock'n'roll with white girls was happening, and we wanted our version of that. She had that raw energy – like Janis Joplin. We thought we'd do a P-Funk thing to it, and she caught onto it pretty good. We did *Osmium* together and wrote a lot of stuff, like The Silent Boatman. She was a good writer, really particular about getting it right, a *perfectionist*! She would take 50 times 'til she got it right. My favourite thing we did together was I Got A Thing For You Daddy [off *Self Portrait*, 1970]. We were really close at that point and Invictus was hot, with Freda Payne, The Chairmen of The Board… but her husband blew it for all of us, because he got mad with the one radio station that could've broke her. That killed *Self Portrait*. I saw her a few times after in upstate New York, when she was still doing stuff, but I never heard any of it. It was a shame. She never got her chance."

As told to Ian Harrison

Ruth, before she gave up the funk: "She was a *perfectionist*!" says George Clinton.



SALT OF THE EARTH

Mixing drinks, cutting tunes, foiling cops, life's a gas when you're **KEITH RICHARDS**, the human personification of the rock'n'roll spirit. But what of the shadows – mardy Mick, tragic Brian, dead Bobby and Mac – that loom? With a rare solo record in the bag, it's time for a full philosophical download from the Rolling Stones' guitar guru. "We're born to have fun," he instructs **PAT GILBERT**. "If you take it too seriously, you're fucked!"

Portrait by **MARK SELIGER**.

T'S AN OFFER FEW OF US WOULD REFUSE. "FANCY A DRINK?" ASKS KEITH Richards, a minute or two after the tape has clicked off. With MOJO nodding affirmatively, Richards leads us to the kitchen of his manager's office high above New York's Broadway, grabs two paper cups, empties a vodka miniature in each, and pours in a slug of fizzy orange.

Up until now, Richards and his myth – as rock'n'roll's piratical mischief-maker, arch hedonist and Lord of Misrule – have entwined only abstractly in 90 minutes of roving conversation and salty anecdotes. But now MOJO sees the legend in action. Cigarette clamped in pursed lips, Richards takes a large bag of ice from the fridge, lifts it above his head and, with extraordinary violence, smashes it on the floor, sending dozens of cubes scattering everywhere.

"Hurgh, hurgh, hurgh," he chuckles throatily, surveying the mess with a playful glint in his dark-brown eyes. He pulls a mock-surprised face. "Oh no, it looks like an Eskimo's just pissed all over the floor..."

We 'chink' paper cups while an assistant is dispatched to corral the floe of errant ice. As the booze in Richards' infamous 'Nuclear Waste' cocktail kicks in, MOJO looks at the giggling guitarist and wonders: what gives a 71-year-old man the licence to prepare a mid-afternoon drink in such a randomly irresponsible fashion?

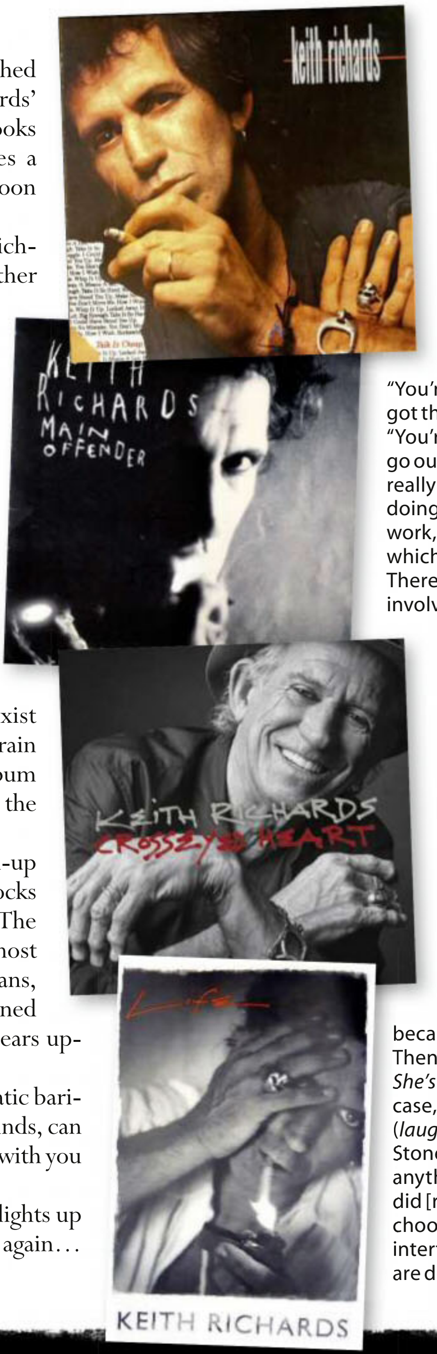
The answer is self-evident: this man is Keith Richards, and a lifetime spent cavalierly upending social norms – whether turning heroin into a rock'n'roll fashion essential, clubbing a stage-invader with his Telecaster, or snorting his father's ashes – is a sizeable component of his enduring allure.

Another, of course, is his transformative genius as a songwriter and guitarist, long proven in his 53 years as a Rolling Stone and certified anew by *Crosseyed Heart*, Richards' new solo album – only his third. Initiated as far back as 2008 and consciously conceived as a companion-piece to his rambunctious autobiography, Life, its songs are inspired by real events and painted in the panoply of Keef-anointed musical styles – picked acoustic Delta blues (the title track), reggae (a cover of Gregory Isaacs' Love Is Overdue), Memphis soul (Lover's Plea) and honking 12-bar boogie (Blues In The Morning). Help from of a cast of fast friends, including drummer-producer Steve Jordan, Norah Jones, Ivan and Aaron Neville, Waddy Wachtel, Bernard Fowler, Blondie Chaplin, and late Stones saxist Bobby Keys, add to the impression of Richards circling his wagon train for a spectacular and poignant final stand. "The idea behind the album was: Getting to know Keith more," says Jordan. "The more of Keith the better. It's been about capturing his personality and life on record."

As MOJO prepares to quiz the Human Riff, we overhear the build-up to his presidential-style arrival through a closed door – "He's two blocks away"; "No, not to the studio, the office!"; "He's downstairs now!" The tension becomes unbearable. Then suddenly in walks one of the most famous faces in rock'n'roll, a slight figure dressed in off-duty blue jeans, light cotton shirt and turquoise trainers. His craggy, elfin visage is tanned nut-brown like a country gardener's, and his distinctive sticky-out ears uphold a grey trilby hat.

"Pleased to meet you," rasps Richard in his slurred, faux-aristocratic baritone, ever accompanied by an unhurried, roguish chuckle that, one finds, can communicate everything from disbelief to deep joy to regret. "I'll be with you in five minutes..."

Exactly 29 minutes later, Keith Richards re-enters the room and lights up a Marlboro. "Sorry about that. The Stones are about to go on tour again... Hurgh, hurgh, hurgh. Oh my! Are you ready...?"



Mark Seliger

Your last solo record, *Main Offender*, came out 23 years ago. Why make a solo record now – did you want to make a public statement about where you're at?

No... I realised that it's been a long time since I'd taken myself outside of the Stones' shack. It's funny because there's one part of you saying, (*piratey voice*) "You're being disloyal!" Then you got the other Stones thinking, "You're crazy, why do you need to go out and do that?" And I didn't really *need* to do it, I just enjoyed doing it. It's an interesting way to work, just me and Steve [Jordan], which makes it fairly cheap. There's none of the logistics involved in getting a whole band together, and after a while it started to fall into a nice groove. Steve has to take an awful lot of the credit for getting this album together. I almost have to be held at gun-point to do solo stuff – someone has to persuade me very convincingly to do it.

I guess until the mid-1980s there was an unspoken agreement that the Stones wouldn't make solo records. Is that right?

Yeah, it was unspoken because it was never brought up. Then suddenly Mick brings out *She's The Boss* [in 1985]. Oh! In that case, suddenly it *was* spoken (*laughs*). Well, we either do the Stones or not. So there was never anything written down. But if you did [record solo], you tried to choose places where it didn't interfere with what the Stones are doing. With this record, ➢

"WRITING THE BOOK, I FELT LIKE I'D LIVED MY WHOLE LIFE TWICE. I WASN'T SUPPOSED TO MAKE IT THE FIRST TIME AROUND!"

Stepping out of his comfort zone: "I almost have to be held at gun-point to do solo stuff."; (opposite) by his (solo) works shall ye know him.

Keith Richards, an innocent abroad in 1964: "In the Midwest we once got arrested for being girls."

"THE SONGS GROW AS YOU PLAY THEM; THE OLDER THEY ARE, THE MORE MAGIC THERE IS IN THEM."

⮜ I started it when we were in hibernation, in 2007-8, so there's been no time pressure. All that's important is when it comes out, it comes out right. I have a feeling that when Mick found out about it, he said, "Let's get the Stones working again!"

So do you think Mick disapproves?

Oh I don't know. I'll never know the truth – that's *all* I know. He doesn't particularly like to work with me all the time, but he doesn't want me to work with anyone else, either. He's a bit jealous in that way.

You seem to be exploring your favourite musical styles on *Crosseyed Heart* – country blues, Memphis soul, ballads, lovers' rock. Is that harder to do in the Stones?

From my point of view, any of these songs could just as well have been Stones songs – if [the others] had been around at the time to record them. It's just what I had available in my locker. There's a lot of 'hat's off' stuff here – to Robert Johnson, Gregory Isaacs, Otis Redding, Leadbelly, of course. Goodnight Irene is one of those songs that I've known forever. I've heard really good versions – like Leadbelly's – and millions of bad ones. So I went back and checked the original lyrics and they were pretty heavy. "I take morphine and die" – suddenly you're not in The Kingston Trio's version any more! I tried to get close to the original, lyric-wise, and then 12-string it. I got a lovely little Brazilian mandolin that gave it that hurdy-gurdy sort of touch. It's a wonderful instrument.

With both Bobby Keys and another auxiliary Stone, Ian McLagan, passing away last December, did you ever think this record might be your…

(*Interrupts*) Like a last statement? No, I didn't. (*Chuckles*) It's what I do, make records, and I just happened to fall in with Steve and we found an interesting trail to follow. With writing the book, I came out the other end like I'd just lived my whole damned life twice. I wasn't supposed to make it the first time around! (*Laughs uproariously*)

At the height of the Stones' drug madness in the early '70s, Bobby was your partner in crime. Did you reflect fondly on those times when he died?

When you say "soul brother" – him and me! I'm gonna miss that man. I never know whether to laugh or cry when I think of Bob. I tend to go to the laughing side. That cat had Buddy Holly as a neighbour, he was out on the road playing with Buddy Knox by the time he was 15. He was the repository of rock'n'roll – the stories, the people he played with. I didn't even find out until a couple of years ago that he's on Elvis's Return To Sender (*sings sax part*). Boots Randolph couldn't make it, so he recommended Bob.

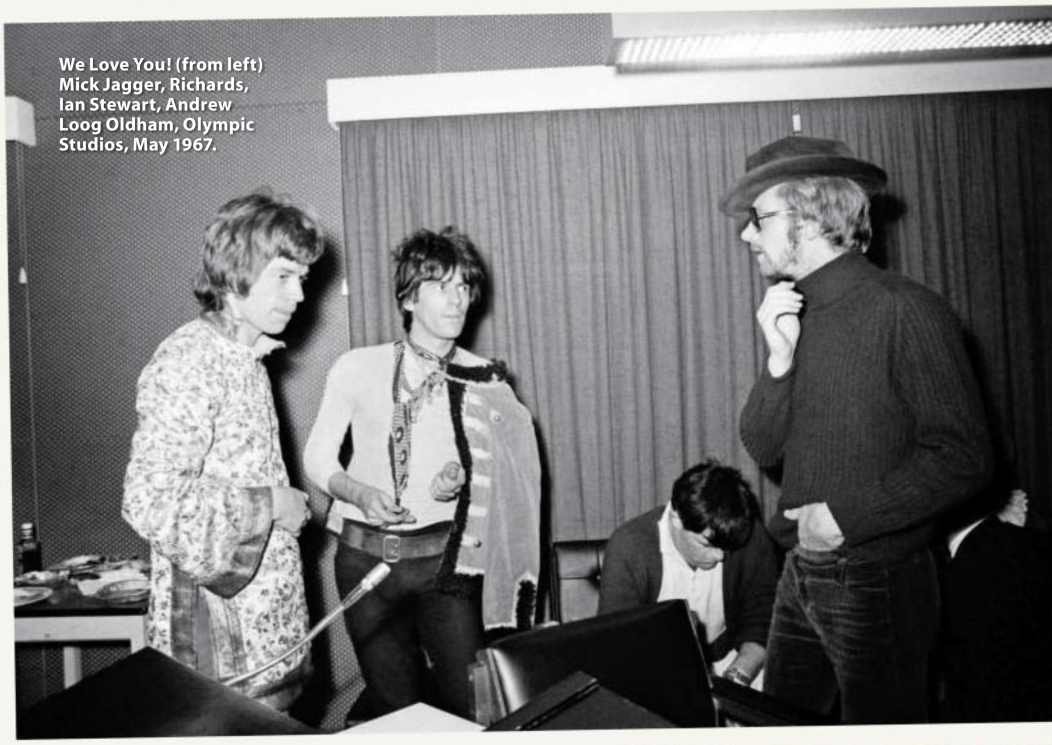
You two obviously got up to some extraordinary mischief together. That whole Cocksucker Blues period…

Yeah, he was a mischievous man… He couldn't help it! There was an incredible scene in the Customs House in Hawaii coming back from Australia [in February 1973]. Before we left Sydney, we were patting each other down, going, "Are you clean?" Everything must go! "EMG" it's called. Then we fly out of Australia, land in Hawaii, the first port of entry to America. Bob's there, this big Texan with his saxophone. "What have you got there?" "A saxophone." He pulls it out of the case and out flies this hypodermic syringe which sticks in the wooden table top, right in front of the Customs man. (*Ironic voice*) "Anything to declare, sir?"

I go to catch the plane to 'Frisco and when I get on, Bobby Keys is in front of me. Apparently, Bobby had made quite an impression on the daughter of the governor of Hawaii, Mr Dole, and the minute he got popped at the airport he called her. They ripped up all the paperwork in front of him, and said, "On your way, get out of here!" Talk about one lucky fucker.

Some of the material on *Crosseyed Heart* is very tender – your duet with Norah Jones on Illusion is lovely. Are you the romantic one in the Stones? You wrote Ruby Tuesday, did the basis of Angie…

Yeah, there are a couple of ballads on here. I suppose you don't get a lot of chance to explore that area with the Stones. But when we have, we've done some great songs – yes, Angie, ➢


We Love You! (from left) Mick Jagger, Richards, Ian Stewart, Andrew Loog Oldham, Olympic Studios, May 1967.

"KEITH WAS AN URBAN COWBOY"

Former Rolling Stones manager **Andrew Loog Oldham** remembers the protean Keith.

"There is not a day that Keith Richards does not add to. He remains everything that most others are not, simply because he is the way he always was… about the music – that American music that turned out to be the key to life for those of us born during that awful bloody war.

Of course, The Rolling Stones started off as a blues group but quickly adapted to being a pop group. After all, what was the alternative? Going home with Cyril Davies on the tube to Wembley? Keith didn't live with Brian because Brian lived with his other eight wives. Keith lived with Mick because that's the way somebody's god unplanned it. Their mantra was always, We will play your silly game to get what we want, but fuck your plans and expectations for us. We will not be ruled or overruled.

I was asked recently about how much crap would Keith take from me or the other Stones. The answer: the *right* amount of crap. He let me chop the "s" off his surname on a whim of mine for a while when it worked for me and didn't make any difference to him. Keith was always film noir, the godfather in the wings letting the fairy godmother have his way with the world on-stage.

The first real song he and Mick wrote was Tell Me (You're Coming Back To Me), not As Tears Go By as is often told, because Tell Me… proved they could write *for the band*, and that was the key to the highway. And then, with The Last Time, they started to write for the world. The earlier Heart Of Stone was very important because it gave us the appearance of a follow-up in the US to Time Is On My Side. Get Off Of My Cloud was very important because it gave us the right follow-up to Satisfaction for all the world.

From the giddy-up, Keith was an urban cowboy living in black, white and of course the blues. He dressed for the road and never needed to go home and change because the world was his stage and he knew it. He was always about the work and always about having fun getting it done – no crying in Argentina or anywhere. He mastered the short form – the pop song. He mastered the long form, and life, which for Keith remains a work in progress. That's his gift to us."

"HE WAS ALWAYS ABOUT THE WORK AND ALWAYS ABOUT HAVING FUN GETTING IT DONE."

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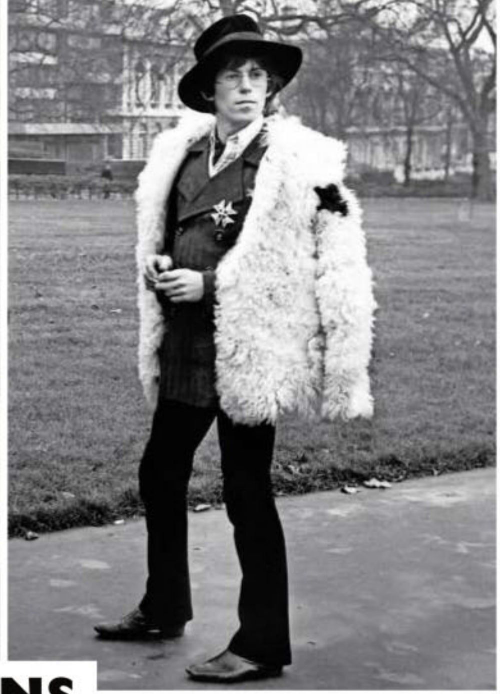
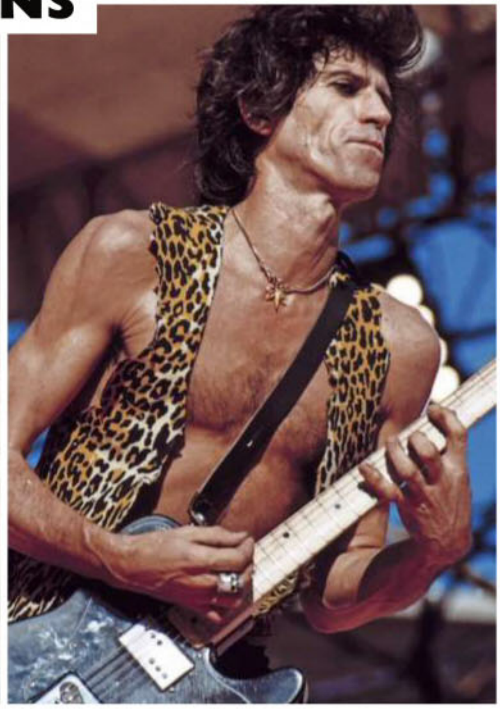


BETWEEN THE BUTTONS



"THERE'S ALWAYS PLENTY OF FUCK YOU"

Menswear maven **John Varvatos** on the style semantics of rock's best-dressed man.

"Watching the early Stones on television he was for sure the coolest looking guy. I wanted to be him, always. Even when he was relatively clean-cut, it was the attention to detail – the way the suits fit, the way the jackets fit. But it wasn't too thought-out. He took the classic English tailoring and made subtle changes – he was wearing things smaller, closer to the body.

It's definitely *his* style. If you watch The Beatles and the other groups of the mid-'60s there's a thing with uniforms, and Keith was always anti that, always about his own thing. Later in the '60s, it becomes a bit more bohemian. Like the fur coat on top of the suit. It's quite sartorial but at the same time there's a lot of fuck you. There's always plenty of fuck you.

From '71 to about '74 – that, for me, was Keith at his most magical. Everything was so easy, and romantic. There were the scarves. He really got me into scarves. A scarf adds a finishing touch without being corporate, not like your dad in a tie or a bow-tie. It can be flamboyant or can be something subtler – an accent. There's this great picture of Keith from 1972 with these incredible striped flares. We have a big nod to this in our runway show for the next season. It opens up with a vibe that's very much indebted to Keith in 1972.

John Varvatos: tailor to rock legends.

The '80s are what I call his primal stage. He's also taking stuff like animal prints and mixing it with denim and leathers, ripped singlets. No-one dressed like this. Keith was tough, masculine, while Mick was more glam. All the way through, really, Keith has this sartorial continuum. Mick is always representing the moment, but Keith's was an evolution.

"KEITH WAS TOUGH, MASCULINE, WHILE MICK WAS MORE GLAM."

I still get a kick out of him today. No matter what he puts together he always manages to pull it off. When artists work with stylists it ends up with the *clothes* wearing *them*. And with Keith the clothes never wore him. He wore the clothes. He just obviously has an innate sense of his own personal style. He's not following; he's leading. And he's not even *thinking* about leading."

John Varvatos has just presented his SS16 collection. His flagship European store is at 12-13 Conduit Street, London, W1.

◄ for one. There's that streak in me which is always, "I'm very sorry I've just pissed off the most beautiful woman in the world." I'll get on my knees and beg, y'know, "Come on back!" But also that kind of writing strikes a chord in other people. That's probably why I like country music – I like the melancholy, the yearning bit, when they get it right. Like The Everly Brothers – that beautifully crafted broken heart. (*Chuckles*) That's what it's about, that little arrow fired by Cupid.

There's the famous bootleg recording of you playing at the piano – Somewhere Over The Rainbow, in Toronto in 1977. Some may argue that not enough of that stuff got on record.

It never felt appropriate to do it. Can you imagine if I turned up to a Stones session – "I'm playing piano on this one, and it's called Somewhere Over The Rainbow!" I can hear the hooting of laughter in the air! But at the same time I love old standards, I love their construction. And I love playing piano, very badly; but the bits I can play, I can play well. Mozart or Elton John, no. There's something about the piano when you're a guitar player – maybe it's just a physical thing, but the piano to me is like, "How simple! It's all laid out on one strip…" I learned blues piano from [late 'sixth Stone'] Ian Stewart – for whose band, I stress, I still proudly work.

Alamy (2), Photoshot (2), Mary Ellen Matthews, Rex, Getty Images, Mark Seliger

KEEF'S KLOBBER!
(opposite, clockwise from top left) buttoned down in 1964; the pie-eyed piper, 1966; wolf in sheep's clothing, 1967; the pirate capitalist in 1968; pretty in pink, 1970; "the primal phase", 1982; (this page) Keith today: "He's not following, he's leading."

KEITH LEANS FORWARD AND HELPS himself to another cigarette from the open packet on the table. Without his trademark kohl eye-liner or gypsy-scarf bandana, the man who all but invented the idea of cadaverous rock'n'roll chic, xeroxed multiple times by the likes of Johnny Thunders (RIP), Steven Tyler, Chrissie Hynde, Peter Perrett et al, appears in disarmingly rude health. Richards famously kicked heroin in the years following the 1977 Toronto bust but for the next 30 years pretty much everything else was fair game.

Then, in 2006, the unthinkable happened. After undergoing life-threatening brain surgery in New Zealand after falling from the bough of a tree ("I wasn't collecting coconuts. I was sitting on a branch about seven feet from the ground and fell off"), Richards was advised by his doctors to knock cocaine on the head for good.

The result has been a many-years class-A-free Keef, which, depending on your point of view, is either a major blow to his once impeccable credentials as "the world's most elegantly wasted human being", or, more sensibly, a blessing that will hopefully anneal his good health for years to come. Richards assures me that, during our chat, his paper cup contains orange soda only; nevertheless, his speech is at times markedly slurred and, later, his attempt to enunciate the phrase "physical education instructor" has alarming shades of sloshed thespian.

Which begs the question…

So… do you still drink much alcohol?

I like to keep my hand in! (*Uproarious chuckle*) Other than that, I'm pretty straight these days…

Is it a different experience making music clean? Is it more, or less, intense?

It's difficult to say once you're on it. It's like all those jazz players who took heroin because they thought they'd be like Charlie Parker. But no! All drugs are different and, yes, I would say I got a whole lot out of cocaine; I got more out of it than it took out of me. It made me concentrate more – I'd stay up four or five days. In that time, other people had changed their clothes, they'd shaved, they'd gone to work and come back. I found it's something not to recommend – you're not going to make any *better* music out of it. But you're certainly not going to make any worse. Sometimes I've chased songs for four or five days until I got it right. And I certainly didn't do it on organic food!

When you're not being a Stone or the solo thing, you famously read a lot and…

I still smoke a lot, too, and not just cigarettes (*laughs like a drain*). One of the most pleasant things to watch is a map of America [showing ➤

"I GOT A WHOLE LOT OUT OF COCAINE; I GOT MORE OUT OF IT THAN IT TOOK OUT OF ME."

"Keith likes it here – too much maybe." In the saddle with Patti Hansen at Long View Farm, Massachusetts, where Richards recorded key solo tracks in 1981; (below) the bootleg in question; (bottom) jail looms, Toronto, March 1977.

Rolling Stone
KEITH
RICHARDS

WHEN I FEEL BLUE IN THE NIGHT

The enduring appeal of Keith Richards' solo bootleg, *A Stone Alone*, by **Danny Eccleston**.

MERLE HAGGARD'S plaintive jailhouse lament, Sing Me Back Home, could not have been rendered more pitifully. A low moan of pain and regret, a personality deconstructed, all cards on the table. A clogged voice, craggy like a desperate Dylan, recognisable(ish) from that skimpy handful of Rolling Stones album cameos: Happy, You Got The Silver, Salt Of The Earth…

With prison looming for Keith Richards – the discovery of an ounce of heroin in his room at the Harbour Castle Hotel, Toronto, in February 1977 carried with it the threat of seven years to life – the Rolling Stones guitarist did the only thing he could think of: book two days at Sounds Interchange on Adelaide Street, and record some tunes. Subsequently included on a blizzard of solo Richards bootlegs – most notably *A Stone Alone* – and often, as here, mixed with later solo recordings that muddy their provenance, the tracks seem to cut to the heart of Keith-ness. "This may have been the last days of a condemned man," notes Keith connoisseur Chuck Prophet. "His loss was our gain."

Sing Me Back Home's tumbledown, honky-tonk piano rings with inimitable Keith timing as he inhabits a man bound for the gallows, craving a melody to soothe his passage: "Make my old memories come alive/Take me away and turn back the years." It's astonishing, but it's not alone. Richards is almost as achingly bereft on Johnny Paycheck and Bobby Austin's Apartment No. 9: "Loneliness surrounds me," he sings, encircled by reverb-drenched Keiths. Then there's Glenn Sutton's She Still Comes Around – a staple of Jerry Lee Lewis's country repertoire but more an uncanny channelling of old pal Gram Parsons, the man who unchained Richards' country heart in the late '60s. As Keith stewed, Jagger pranced around Manhattan thinking of Puerto Rican girls ("soaking up the New York disco sleaze," notes Prophet. "Proving that he knew what time it was.") Richards could not have been further away.

A STONE ALONE shouldn't have endured so stubbornly – it's just a bootleg, after all – but for a bootleg it's almost canonical. Chuck Prophet remembers how his copy "managed to survive longer than so many relationships. And apartments, storage spaces. Cardboard boxes in my parent's garage that they threatened to throw away. And did. But this record is still here, in my hand." Maybe it's because it's the closest we've ever had to a proper Keith Richards solo LP, because, even when officially off the Stones leash, he's tended to surround himself with like-minded pals up for a jam.

It shouldn't work as an album, either. Less than half its tracks come from the Toronto session. The rest are from 1981, when the Stones came to Long View Farm, Massachusetts, to rehearse their Tattoo You tour. Sent on as a kind of outrider, Richards tested the facilities with familiarly busted versions of what we now see are his solo defaults: first-wave rock, country ballads, standards.

His take on Hoagy Carmichael's The Nearness Of You from this period is extraordinary, the phrasing unique and heart-tugging, the piano bringing the country (enjoy it at its cleanest, sonically, in the movie Basquiat, but not on the soundtrack album, sadly). Equally startling: his broke-down version of All I Have To Do Is Dream, with every nuance dragged out of "I need you so that I could die", a line you barely notice under the beauteous lilt of The Everly Brothers' original. Richards finds on piano the same clashing resonances he seems to on guitar and you're struck – as if the thought were novel – that Mick could not sing this song. He's not enough of a romantic.

"I NEVER GET A CHANCE TO SING BY MYSELF WITHOUT SOME BASTARD WEIRDING OUT."

"I never get a chance to do this," Richards told Long View Farm proprietor Gil Markle as the session proceeded. "You don't understand. I suppose you think it's all fun being me. Listen, I never get a chance to sing by myself like this – play the piano – without some bastard weirding out and asking me why I wasn't playing the guitar, and looking mean. People have their ideas about me. I bet you didn't think I could play the piano, did you? Or sing classics from the '30s. Well, I can."

Markle saw the pressures first-hand as management (and Richards' then-girlfriend, subsequently wife, Patti Hansen) leaned on the pair of them to wrap up the sessions.

"'You've got to invent some excuse," Hansen told Markle. "'He may never leave here if you don't. You don't know Keith. He likes it here, too much maybe. But he's got to be in Rome before next Monday to get his visa fixed. Can't you say something about the plane, or something? Really, Gil, he may not ever leave here, at all.'"

"Not before The Everly Brothers' tune," said Markle, so we have him to thank for that. And Keith to thank for everything else.

Read more of Gil Markle's memories at www.studiowner.com. Chuck Prophet's album Night Surfer is out on Yep Roc

States where cannabis is legal], where it goes, Green… green… green… Whether it's a good thing in the long run, I don't know. When I started to smoke, usually it would be a backstage thing. Usually black guys from other bands. "We're doing three shows a day, on the bus all the time, and you guys come out and you're all together musically and look great…" They're like 40-odd years old, and we were 20. "How do you guys do this?" It was like, (*deep Southern voice*) "Well son, smoke one of these… and take one of these…" Drugs I fell into because it was part of the job, part of the *milieu*, to use the French. All of a sudden we needed help because we were knackered.

So do you relax by reading a book while having a spliff?

Yeah! Sitting in the sun… I smoke regularly, an early morning joint. Strictly Californian.

There's a song on the album, You Got Nothing On Me, which mentions "the cops"…

(*Interrupts*) The cops come up quite a bit on this album!

…And they're trying to get you to "squawk". Are you still regarded by some as a threat to society?

It came from when I was writing the autobiography. I was thinking of my experiences in Chelsea in the '70s. Anything contemporary, they don't touch me no more! (*Chuckles*) I was their Number 1 target at the time – talk about police harassment! I got used to it. When they started to plant stuff on me, it was notorious around Chelsea in those years. There was a lot of bribery and screwing going on. I mean, as English as I am, the idea of "the old bobby" – he doesn't exist, barely. But when they come around knocking at your door, kicking it in – you think, "Ah, yes, the other side of the coin" (*laughs*).

Are you proud of the speech you made at Chichester Magistrates Court after the notorious Redlands bust in 1967, when you said, "We're not old men. We are not worried about petty morals"? That seems, historically, an incendiary 1960s moment.

Yes, I guess it was. Sometimes I do think about that one. First off, the thing that surprises me is that I opened my mouth at all. It got me an extra six months! (*Chuckles*) Luckily, the judge had already screwed the case up. But I remember standing there, and he was talking about (*prurient voice*) "some ladies standing naked on couches" – and I'm like, "I'm not interested in your petty morals." I was like (*puts hand over his mouth*), "Oh shit, did I just say that?" But some things just have to be said sometimes. It was nothing to do with scrapings of a bit of weed here and there. It was to do with a cultural clash.

Were you aware that, during that time, with your look and attitude, you were creating the archetype of the English rock'n'roll libertine?

Yeah. I thought, "Well, somebody's got to stand up for it!" You don't think, "That's what I'm going to do, be an English libertine!" You do it because you thought it was right and there was nothing wrong with it. What was wrong was the *other* side. It was saying, "I have no problem with drugs, I have a problem with policemen." I suppose suddenly being elevated to this position of "The Rolling Stones, The Beatles, da da da", I felt I could say that. Let me put it this way: I wouldn't have said those things if I was Joe Bloggs.

With Him Indoors: (top) on the steps of Chichester Magistrates court, May 1967; (below) in 1974, "Mick and I joust all the time."

Toronto Star/Getty Images, Ken Regan/Camera 5/Contour by Getty Images, Photoshot, PA

Your old flatmate at Edith Grove, James Phelge, recalled an incident in Trafalgar Square where you suddenly turned on a northern tourist who was berating you for having long hair. He was quite shocked at how aggressive you were…

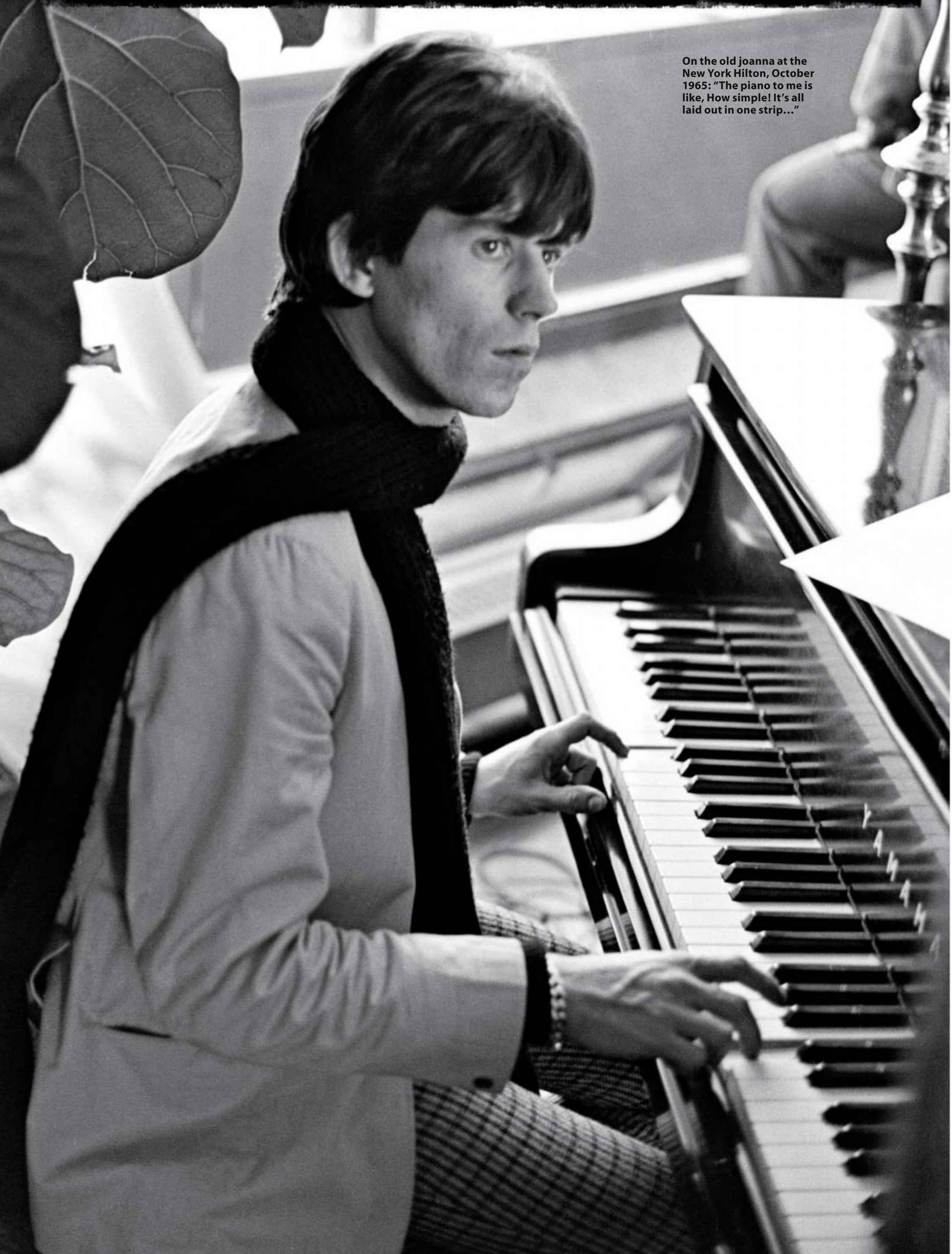
There were many, many incidents like that, and if Phelge remembers it, it must have happened. Usually, that stuff was like water off a duck's back. I had far worse in America when we first arrived. In the Midwest we once got arrested for being girls! (*Laughs*) We were in a swimming pool in a Holiday Inn on a highway in Georgia somewhere, and suddenly (*makes siren noise*), "Oh, the cops are coming… and they're turning in here!" The cop gets out and shouts, "OK, where are the topless women?" Someone had called in saying there was a bunch of topless girls in the pool. We were like, "Really? (*Cups non-existent boobs*) This is all we got!" Obviously it was some irate person – probably a woman – who called them, thinking we were chicks. She must have had pretty bad eyesight!

Your image in the late '60s and beyond – the eyeliner and scarves – was that your way of expressing your outlaw spirit. Like warpaint?

(*Suddenly bashful*) Kind of. I've got a bit on from yesterday, actually,

"MICK DOESN'T LIKE TO WORK WITH ME ALL THE TIME, BUT HE DOESN'T WANT ME TO WORK WITH ANYONE ELSE, EITHER. HE'S A BIT JEALOUS IN THAT WAY."

“I LOVE OLD STANDARDS, THEIR CONSTRUCTION. AND I LOVE PLAYING PIANO, VERY BADLY.”



On the old joanna at the New York Hilton, October 1965: “The piano to me is like, How simple! It’s all laid out in one strip…”

The Keith Richards Fitness Plan in full effect; (below) with pal and protégé Johnny Depp.

≺ we did a photoshoot. (*Pause*) I don't know, I always felt I didn't have enough eyelashes! On-stage, I thought, I'll thicken them up a bit. Then it becomes like warpaint.

AS RICHARDS' RASCALLY LAUGH RISES and falls yet again, his bright eyes rolling theatrically upwards, it's impossible not to find the Rolling Stone a captivating presence. He is the ultimate naughty schoolboy who's never wanted or been allowed to grow up. Yet the framed photos of Keith and the Stones that line his manager's office are a reminder that his free-spirited tilt at life may sit more easily with some bandmates than others. There are, it's noted, far more photographs of Keef goofing around with Ronnie Wood – two cackling, scarecrow brothers-in-guitars – than there are of Richards and Mick Jagger.

In Life, the guitarist confirms that, after Mick had a fling with Keith's girlfriend Anita Pallenberg during the filming of Nic Roeg's Performance in 1968, their relationship was never quite the same. Yet their half-century bond is such that Richards vows he'll cut the throat of anyone who'd ever deliberately cross his writing partner – "and that's my prerogative," he reaffirms today, flintily.

Years of tussling came to a head when, in his autobiography, Keith referred to Jagger's "tiny todger" – something that understandably may not have gone down well with rock's storied Lothario. Yet five years on, the Stones seem as robust as ever, with this summer's Zip Code tour of the US soon to be followed by autumn dates in South America and possibly beyond.

Did Mick confront you about the things you said in Life?

Oh yeah! He called me – (*unhappy Jagger voice*) "I have to talk to you…" (*Long laugh*) Of course, a few things rankled with him but I then produced the pages I had blue-pencilled out. "Look – you're getting off lightly, pal!"

Your relationship has always seemed very nuanced – friends but rivals, brothers but separate islands?

Mick and I joust with each other all the time. From my end it's never been a fight. Mick's a control freak – it's necessary for him to believe he's Numero Uno, so most of the time I go along with it – unless I think he's making a really wrong decision affecting the Stones. Maybe we *enjoy* jousting with each other. I wake up in the middle of the night sometimes and jot down a line – "I'll save that one for him!" (*Chortles*) We're mates, and as far as work goes, I couldn't think of another frontman to back up. He's amazing. What he puts in there is a rare dedication. I think he has a lot to prove to himself but it's unnecessary, because he's already proved it all. It's like, "Relax, Mick, take it easy." But Mick Jagger relaxing? That's very ➢

"NONE OF THAT SHIT THEY TELL US ABOUT DRUGS, DRINK, TOBACCO, IS TRUE."

"LIVE LIKE KEITH!"

P.J. O'Rourke salutes Keith Richards' iron constitution and "studious streak".

"I grew up in Toledo, Ohio where our dominant radio station was CKLW, which was where soul and Motown music was played. And I spent a lot of time in Chicago, where my mother's family was from, which was blues and soul-oriented. Right from the git-go, me and most of my friends liked The Rolling Stones better than The Beatles. They had the blues licks – especially in the early stuff. What I admired most without knowing it was Keith Richards because he was behind the whole blues aspect. I associate Brian Jones with the flaky tambourine and Moroccan bongos and all that kind of crap.

Keith Richards is a man who proves to me that all known health advice is obviously completely wrong – because *he's alive*. So none of that shit they tell us about drugs, drink, tobacco, bad eating habits, not getting enough sleep – and whatever else Keith has been up to – is true. My response to that is "live like Keith!" But I'd say a hearty constitution is in the genes. I was pretty close friends with Hunter Thompson. Thompson's secret was genetic. He was a big, rangy hillbilly with an absolute iron constitution. The other trick – and I'll bet Keith does this too – is to be a little more moderate than one is seeming to be. Hunter gave me a tip which has stood me in good stead: if you're gonna drink a lot, find the most expensive blended Scotch and drink it with a lot of water.

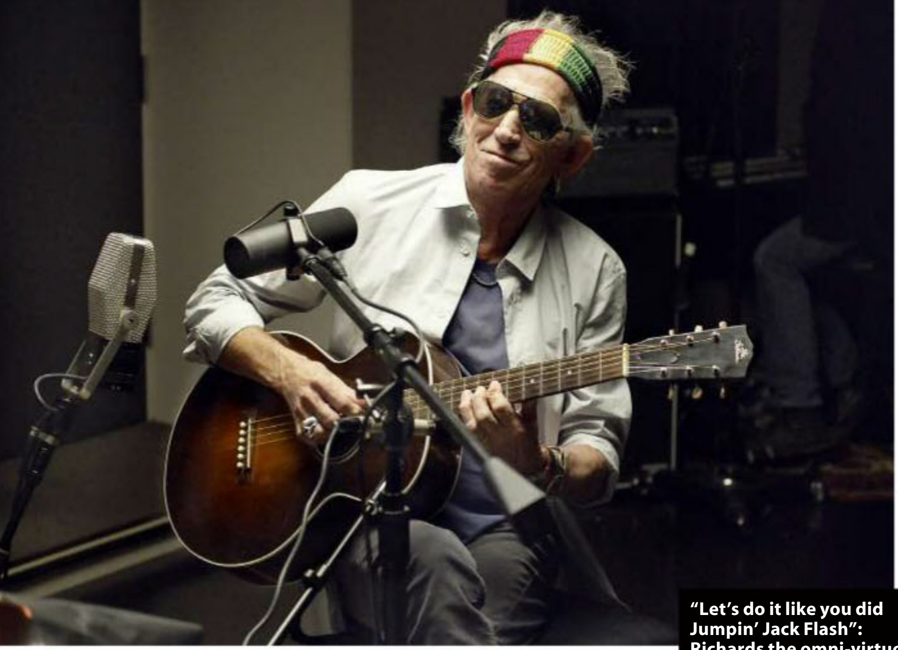
I have a feeling that Keith Richards is very smart. I don't know, but I certainly get the idea that he is a student of what he does. Probably better read than we'd been inclined to imagine. He knows his blues so well, ya know? There's obviously a studious streak in him. He's not just listening to a couple of old records and getting a general idea.

It takes a bright man to understand this stuff and it takes a certain studious side to have studied it. The understanding and the studying are evident in Keith's work. To me it's about the music – it's all I really know about Keith and I suppose all I really care. I feel like he's been the driving force behind what I like about The Rolling Stones – which is certainly not the aging peacock dance. And he's got an amazing sense of style, without which there'd be no Johnny Depp – though that's not something I would care to emulate!"

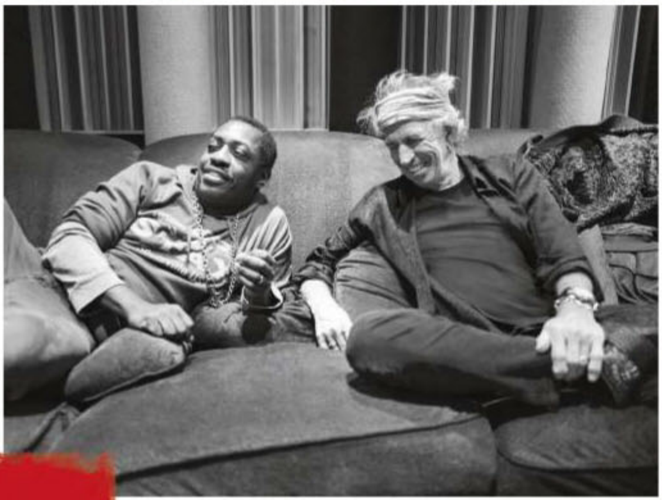
As told to Michael Simmons

Author/humorist P.J. O'Rourke's latest book is Thrown Under The Omnibus: A Reader.

Mark Seliger, Alamy, Getty Images



"Let's do it like you did Jumpin' Jack Flash": Richards the omni-virtuoso, and with Steve Jordan (right, and below right).



"THE ONLY THING KEITH CAN'T DO IS PLAY DRUMS!"

Longtime drumming foil **Steve Jordan** invites us inside Keith's *Crosseyed Heart.*

"After Keith did his book tour, he actually contemplated retirement. I told him, What are you talking about? That's ridiculous, don't ever bring that up again! He hadn't played in a while, so we took the recording sessions really slowly – bi-weekly to start with, just a few hours. We'd knock about a tune he already had, maybe one he'd even cut a demo with in the Stones.

I didn't want the record to be done as a band, like the last X-Pensive Winos record [1992's *Main Offender*] My approach was, OK, let's do it like you did with Jumpin' Jack Flash or Street Fighting Man – all those great Stones records, on which he played everything. The thing we didn't get enough of in the past is Keith's bass playing – he's a wonderful bass player and plays like no one else. The bass on Jumpin' Jack Flash and Street Fighting Man, Sympathy For The Devil, that's Keith Richards. If you check out Rock'n'Roll Circus and the Dirty Mac [ad hoc supergroup starring Richards, Lennon, Clapton and Mitch Mitchell], his interpretation of Yer Blues is much different than Paul McCartney's and I love it. Keith also plays most of the guitars and keyboards.

The only thing he can't do is play drums, which is quite fascinating actually, he can't put two beats together. But that's great for me (*laughs*).

We cut everything ourselves and then [Winos guitarist] Waddy Wachtel came in for a couple of days. Ivan Neville, Keith and I cut Lover's Plea, our tribute to Otis Redding and the Stax legacy, and we brought in [Stax legend] David Porter for a co-write, and to finish up the lyric. Ivan played the Wurlitzer and Keith overdubbed the bass. I was thrilled that throughout we could stay focused on Keith's playing – to me it's an extension of his memoir.

The Keith Richards myth is quite frankly hysterical. Keith is one of the smartest individuals I know. He's very well-read. And the passion he has for music – that's the thing that keeps him alive. He's always in it. There's no faking it, he doesn't ever do it by half."

> "AFTER HIS BOOK TOUR, HE ACTUALLY CONTEMPLATED RETIREMENT. I TOLD HIM, THAT'S RIDICULOUS."

rare. He's one of those guys that has to be doing something all the time.

Now that you've reined the excess in a bit, and Ronnie is sober, is it as much fun on the road? Do you worry the Stones' totemic power might be sapped?

Well, me and Ronnie always have a laugh, whenever and wherever. When he said, "I'm straightening up," I said, "That will be an interesting experiment, Ron…" (*Chuckles*) And he's kept at it, right up until this point. And the thing is, he's *exactly* the same as he was when stoned out of his mind! "You didn't need to take all that shit, man! You're hilarious anyway." The guy has got a lot of optimistic energy. Now he's remarried, too – it's very lucky for him that another woman would take him on! (*Chuckles*). I love playing with him, and he's been knocking me out. (*Mock annoyed*) He's been *listening* and *practising*.

Do you have to do that – practise? Surely you must know the songs by now?

The first few days of rehearsals, I do have to do a bit of thinking. By the time you get on-stage you don't want to be like, "Satisfaction – what key is that in again?" Sometimes you have a complete blank. So you have to go back to basics. What's interesting is how quickly everyone folds back into it. The first day of rehearsals is usually a laugh, we're playing clangers all over the place. "Whoops, sorry!" (*Chuckles*) But after two or three days it just slides in. I love playing with Darryl [Jones], a great bass player. Being a jazz player, like Charlie Watts, it means we have this funk-jazz-R&B rhythm section that suits me fine.

Darryl's been with you quite a while now…

Yes. He says, "I'm the new boy, I've only been here 21 years!" Ha ha ha. I said, "What do you want, a cake?"

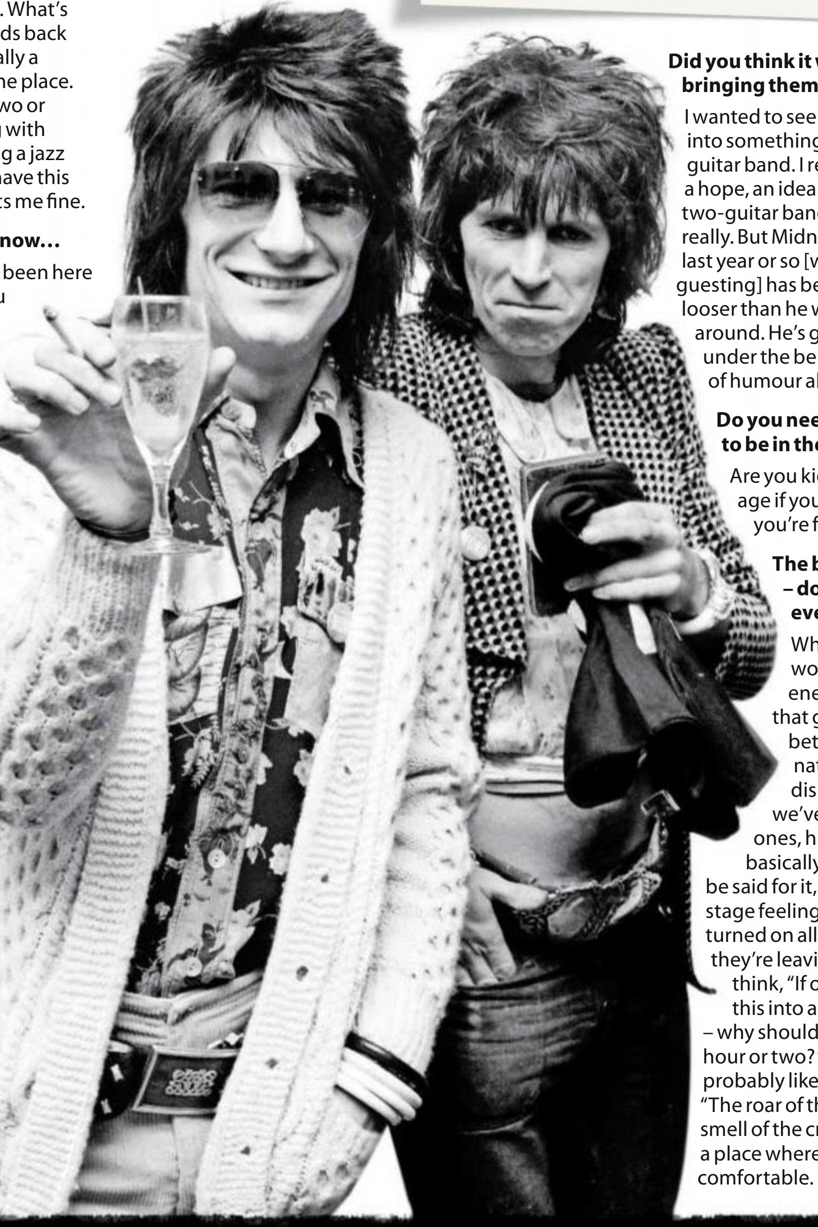
These days, do you have to prepare physically before a tour as well as mentally?

No, no, no. (*Chuckles*) The only time I've ever done anything like that is after an injury – rehab, like when I've broken ribs. I find exercise boring. Actually, when you work with the Stones – which I love to do – rehearsing for eight or nine hours a day, standing up and moving around, I find that enough. I'd rather do that than go crazy on treadmills. Mick does all that stuff, but his dad was a physical education instructor. That's part of him. "Where's Mick?" "He's out running." "In this weather?!" I find that by the time I finish rehearsals, I haven't just been rehearsing the music, my body has been rehearsing too.

When Mick Taylor and Bill Wyman first came back for cameos on the 50 And Counting tour in 2012, did you have any discussions like – "Can you tell me why you left the band again?"

Yes, there were a few of them! And the weirdest answer I had was – and this is a great English thing – "I don't really know…" Wyman, he mainly developed this fear of travelling. Like, what, after going round the world 10 times?! I don't know if that was the whole reason. When I ask Mick Taylor that question, he says, "It's a mystery to me. I don't have any idea… Put it down to my old lady at the time." I said, "That won't wash with me!" (*Long laugh*) I think he believed that he had the extra step to go, career-wise. And being in the Stones you get big ideas. You want to be a producer or a writer. But then, "What have you written in the last 15 years?" "Nothing, really…" Taylor's a funny sod, but I do love him. He's his own worst enemy.

Guitar foils past and present: with (right) golden boy Mick Taylor and (below) the durable Ron Wood.



Did you think it worked musically bringing them into the show?

I wanted to see if it would blossom into something else, like a three-guitar band. I realised that was just a hope, an idea. The Stones are a two-guitar band, and I know that, really. But Midnight Rambler over the last year or so [with Mick Taylor guesting] has been *amazing*. He's a lot looser than he was the first time around. He's got a lot more mileage under the belt – and a better sense of humour about it all.

Do you need a sense of humour to be in the Stones?

Are you kidding? In this day and age if you take it too seriously, you're fucked!

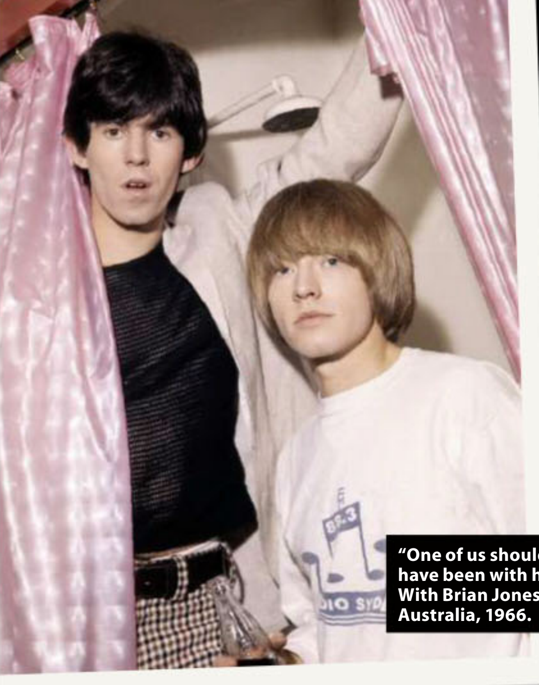
The buzz of playing live – do you still get that even after all this time?

What I love about stage work is that sort of cycle of energy and enthusiasm that goes around. The better part of human nature is usually displayed. I mean, I know we've had one or two bad ones, hurgh hurgh. But basically there's something to be said for it, because you come off stage feeling great, 'cos you've turned on all these people, and they're leaving like, "Yeeeah!" You think, "If only we could translate this into a global phenomenon – why should it just happen for an hour or two?" But by now, I'm probably like some old player… "The roar of the grease paint, the smell of the crowd!" But the stage is a place where I feel totally comfortable. No phone calls…

"RONNIE'S *EXACTLY* THE SAME AS HE WAS WHEN STONED OUT OF HIS MIND! THE GUY HAS A LOT OF OPTIMISTIC ENERGY."

Kevin Mazur (5), Antoine Sanfuentes, PA, Getty Images

"I FEEL I COULD HAVE DONE MORE FOR BRIAN JONES. BUT I WAS IN THE WORST POSITION TO DO THAT, BECAUSE I'D JUST STOLEN HIS OLD LADY."



"One of us should have been with him": With Brian Jones in Australia, 1966.

Do you think the Stones will record another album and tour again? It's 10 years since *A Bigger Bang*.

In truth, the answer to all that is yes, I think we will. We'll do this year, then go into the studio. I know Mick wants to record again – he blurted it out in a meeting: "It's about time we went back and recorded." I was like, "We're here to talk about a tour, right?" So that will be interesting. End of the year.

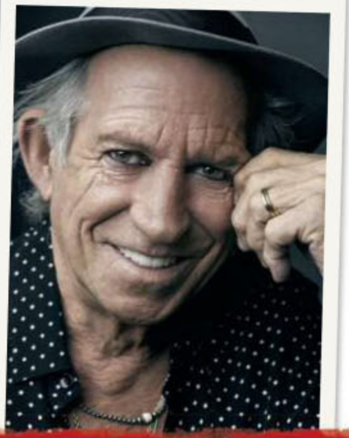
So what is it that drives you on? As you said, you didn't *need* to make *Crosseyed Heart*, yet you clearly put your heart and soul into it. Is your true addiction to making music?

Yeah, but doing it *better* all the time. Or differently. With the Stones, not that differently, but so that nobody goes up there thinking they're playing anything by rote. The songs are wide open and you can throw in other ideas. The thing I find interesting in rehearsals is playing stuff you've done for 30 or 40 years, and thinking, "Oh shit, man. If I'd put that note in the record, it would have been a better record!" The songs grow as you play them; the older they are, the more magic there is in them. It's never dull. We're born to have fun, you see! We can't help it.

Does the money play a part? Every time you read about a Stones tour it seems to state how much you've grossed in millions of dollars.

I don't even think about it. I know I'm getting paid but as to how much… I've never been that interested. But I can say this: since I was 19, I've been raking it in. A lot of it has gone on lawyers! But at the same time, I'm sure everyone feels a different way about money. But the bottom line to me is the bottom line – I don't come off stage going, "How much did I make?" It's anti the whole point of doing it.

AND WITH THAT AND A LENGTHY, diversion on the merits of Chuck Berry and Little Walter Jacobs, our conversation begins to wind down. Any notion that the textured and oft-wistful *Crosseyed Heart* represents some kind of terminal declaration, or else a rehearsal for the end of the guitarist's tenure with the Stones, seems somewhat fanciful after an hour-and-a-half of raucous Keith vitality. He seems more alive and thirsty for music and life – inextricably entangled for him – than ever.



As we retire to the kitchen for the après-chat cocktail, the interview bubble burst, Keith suddenly seems smaller and more shy, but as eager to put MOJO at ease as before. There is one last question: now he's comparatively sober and has revealed new sides to the world through his book, is there anything in life he still feels he needs to mend? Anyone he needs to make peace with? He thinks for a few moments.

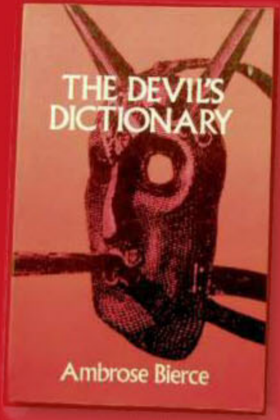
"I feel I could have done more for Brian Jones," he says of the founding Stone who died in mysterious circumstances in June 1969. "But I was also in the worst position to do that, because I'd just stolen his old lady [Anita]. One, or some, of us should have been with him, but you never knew where he was, or what he was doing. Also, you know that 'chaperoning' thing – he was a grown man. But I feel if I *hadn't* have stolen his old lady, maybe that wouldn't have happened."

And with a final throaty chuckle – this time a subdued one of reflection and regret – Keith Richards bids adieu and disappears behind a closed door.

Alamy, Mark Seliger

LIBRARY FOR THE DEVIL

What's on **Keith Richards'** night-stand right now…



1. The Devil's Dictionary

Ambrose Bierce

(Neale Publishing Co, 1911)

In which the Civil War-scarred Ohio journalist applied his misanthropic world-view to the English language itself, offering helpful comic definitions to mutable English words ("EGOTIST, n. A person of low taste, more interested in himself than in me"). The contrarian's bible.

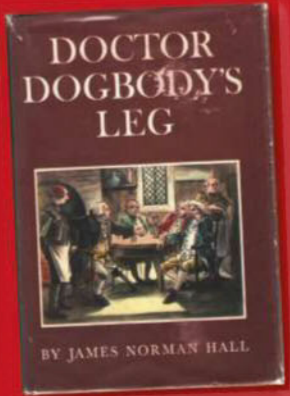
JUST – WILLIAM
RICHMAL CROMPTON

2. Just William

Richmal Crompton

(George Newnes, 1922)

First book of stories cataloguing the adventures of a mischievous schoolboy, and his band of friends, known as The Outlaws. Includes a story in which William turns a temperance meeting into a punch-up and another in which he steals the attentions of his brother's new girlfriend.



3. Doctor Dogbody's Leg

James Norman Hall

(Little, Brown & Co, 1940)

A WW1 flying ace who retired to Tahiti and wrote the Mutiny On The Bounty trilogy, Hall also crafted Napoleonic nautical tales, like these 10 buccaneering riffs on how our titular navy surgeon lost his bally leg. Swashbuckling tips galore.

PATRICK O'BRIAN
THE THIRTEEN GUN SALUTE

4. The Thirteen Gun Salute

Patrick O'Brian

(Collins, 1989)

The thirteenth in the late English novelist's acclaimed series documenting the Napoleonic adventures of "Lucky" Captain Jack Aubrey and ship's surgeon Stephen Maturin. "It's about friendship, camaraderie," says Richards. "Jack Aubrey and Stephen Maturin always remind me a bit of Mick and me."

TIMUR VERMES
LOOK WHO'S BACK
A NOVEL

5. Look Who's Back

Timur Vermes

(MacLehose Press, 2014)

2011: Adolf Hitler wakes up in Berlin, with no memory of anything since 1945. Discovered by TV producers (who assume he is a deadly satirist), he becomes a YouTube sensation. Very funny, especially for someone raised on The Goons, and who once dressed up as a Nazi on The Ed Sullivan Show.

Booknotes by Andrew Male

MOJO FILTER

YOUR GUIDE TO THE MONTH'S BEST MUSIC. EDITED BY JENNY BULLEY

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> "Like a little moth, sturdy and luminous, with heavy clumping shoes."
>
> **ANNA WOOD CAPTURES BJÖRK LIVE IN MANCHESTER. P118**

RATINGS & FORMATS

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DAVID BOWIE THE MUSIC AND THE CHANGES OMNIBUS PRESS

Horse latitudes

Foals' success has seen them circle the globe, restlessly switching producers to find the perfect sound. All it took was time, says **Tom Doyle**. Illustration by **Mark Juncker**.

Foals

★★★★

What Went Down

TRANSGRESSIVE/WARNER BROS. CD/DL/LP

KEY TRACKS
- What Went Down
- Birch Tree
- London Thunder
- Mountain At My Gates

Saint-Rémy-de-Provence is famed for its violent, maddening mistral wind and the fact that the post-ear-severing Vincent Van Gogh, trying to find some equilibrium there at the Saint-Paul asylum in 1889, looked heavenwards and saw the swirls of The Starry Night. Recording their fourth album in the town's La Fabrique studio seems to have had a suitably stirring effect on Foals. Even if there thankfully isn't a Van Gogh-like state of self-destructive agitation evident, there is anxiety and disorientation from the off, in the propulsive Stooges-cum-Nirvana panic attack of the (for them) never-heavier title track. "When I see a man, I see a lion," frontman Yannis Philippakis repeat-screams at its thrilling conclusion, like a man trying to run fast enough to escape his own skin.

The fact that this most muscly and manic of rock songs kicks off *What Went Down* only serves to underline how Foals can't be second guessed. From the almost forbiddingly fiddly math rock of their 2008 debut *Antidotes*, they have expanded outwards and grown more inviting. En route, their sound has polarised into two distinct extremes: teeth-grinding rock and dance tracks unafraid to revive '80s tropes deemed unfashionable in the '90s (synthetic brass stabs; clean, wristy funk guitar).

Such musical schizophrenia was first revealed on this LP's predecessor, 2013's *Holy Fire*, and is now enhanced and refined. *Holy Fire* found Foals racing ahead of the pack. With *What Went Down* designed to further fuel their passionate, unpredictable live shows, the Oxford five-piece are sure to draw in a wider audience.

Where Inhaler on *Holy Fire* found them discovering the invigorating powers of the fuzzbox, *What Went Down* goes in harder on the title track and the dirty proto rock'n'roll of Snake Oil. And while that album's more groovesome parts still had a fidgety element, now in the likes of the rolling funk of Birch Tree, Foals sound more comfortable in themselves. This in part can likely be attributed to the fact that a band who have restlessly changed producers on every album have now settled with James Ford, a man who understands both sides of their sonic character, having overseen productions for Arctic Monkeys and Haim.

As on *Holy Fire*, where the claustrophobic Inhaler immediately gave way to the wide open space of My Number's celebratory funk, here What Went Down cuts into the nod-along groove of Mountain At My Gates, the towering elevation of the title serving as a metaphor for an everyday struggle in cold shadow. It makes for deceptively upbeat listening. Musically, Foals are very firmly on the good foot. Lyrically, Yannis Philippakis's mood is tending towards nihilism: "I'll drive my car without the brakes."

Philippakis has talked about how in some ways *What Went Down* is concerned with the onward march of time. It often sounds like a missive from a man, now 29, staring uneasily at the prospect of his thirties: alienated from his peers through world travel; years of incremental change have resulted in relationships where friends barely recognise one another. Passive rather than angry in Birch Tree, he paints himself as a "troubled romancer" observing the changes, before the gentle reverie of the chorus: "Come meet me by the river/See how the time it flows." Imagine its massed chant at future Foals gigs and it holds a certain poignancy – a gentle acceptance of, rather than rage against, the first signs of the dying of the light.

The ticking clock is back in Albatross, with a sense of urgency over things left to be done: "100 broken lightbulbs above your head" signifying wasted ideas never acted upon. Give It All turns these preoccupations into a mantra – "Give me the time, but not an age/Give me the feel for where I'll go" – over spectral *The Soft Bulletin*-era Flaming Lips balladry, before the slow build alights upon *Hounds Of Love*. Blending the rolling tom-toms and odd Fairlight voicings of Running Up That Hill (A Deal With God) with the climactic chants of Cloudbusting, it proves how Foals can make explicit references and at the same time retain entirely their own character.

Kate Bush returns, at least in lyrical theme, amid the Afrobeat of Night Swimmers, recalling the moonlit abandon of Nocturn from *Aerial*. A road trip leaving behind a blazing city in search of open white road and cool blue lagoons, even Philippakis's one lapse into clunking cliché – the lusty howl of "under the flaming sky" – can't dampen its self-healing spirit. Fittingly, it turns into a midnight rave, replete with a bubbling acid house coda echoing New Order's Fine Time, with added skronky electric guitar.

The mood turns ruminative once again in brooding ballad London Thunder, perhaps the stand-out of *What Went Down*. Depicting himself in the corner of an airport departure lounge, waiting to fly back to the English capital from America ("Lost my mind in San Francisco"), Philippakis is filled with ennui and dread: the fear of returning to a relationship that is forever changed, but never fully explained. Descending through cumulonimbus at his journey's end, he finds determination and resolve: "Now I've come back down I'm older/I'll look for something else to hold on to."

In writing from the heart, Philippakis's voice (always Foals' weak point) has grown stronger and more expressive, fully adding soulful reflection to the band's range of emotional colours. Moreover, Foals consolidate their position here by continuing to do what they do best: expressing big emotions loudly through fizzing rock anger or unbridled, danceable joy.

Alamy

BACK STORY: BOILING BONES

● A key stage in the development of Foals' experimentalism came under the tutelage of Flood on *Holy Fire* where the more idiosyncratic qualities of their sound were fully explored. At the producer's Assault & Battery Studios in Willesden, north London, the band sent runners out to collect bones from nearby butchers which, once the flesh was boiled away, were used for voodoo percussion on Haitian-inspired rhythm tracks. "Flood," says Yannis Philippakis, "was definitely all about capturing some sort of performance magic and getting deep on it."

> "A ROAD TRIP LEAVING BEHIND A BLAZING CITY IN SEARCH OF OPEN WHITE ROAD AND COOL BLUE LAGOONS."

YANNIS TALKS! FOALS' FRONTMAN ON ISOLATION, THE VIOLENCE OF TIME AND KEEPING FRESH.

WWD
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Yannis Philippakis of Foals: "To be creatively ambitious, that's the plan."

"Time is a violent process"

Yannis Philippakis talks to Tom Doyle.

You went to the residential Studio La Fabrique in Provence to make *What Went Down*. Did the isolation help?

"It definitely helped. I think we like to make records away from everyone we know and away from the UK, basically, so that we can just focus totally on the record. I like to work hard in the studio, full 15-hour days. So it's easier to do that in that kind of environment. I think it was good for morale being out there because it was beautiful and kind of hedonistic."

Did cabin fever set in at any points?

"No, no, not at all. When we made *Total Life Forever* in Sweden, that was pretty intense. We had cabin fever there making that record, 'cos we were living in the same room as the studio. La Fabrique has a lot of open space, it's beautiful."

Foals have worked with different producers for each album. Why?

"We just like to keep it fresh. Maybe it's because we hadn't found our dream producer on the first record. If we'd found our guy and we were comfortable in that relationship, then maybe we'd have repeated it. I think because we felt restless on the first couple of records and we felt like we hadn't quite clicked 100 per cent with the producers that we'd been working with, we've just got into a pattern now where we just feel like it's better to change every record."

Thematically, you seem to be dealing in parts with the passing of time.

"One of the things I was thinking about was time I guess, as a kind of physical force. It's got nothing to do with feeling comfortable or settled in myself. Time is a violent process. It's something that strips things away and reduces things to rubble often, y'know. I was kind of interested in it as a destructive force."

London Thunder sounds like a travelogue diary entry written at a very raw moment.

"Yeah, I guess so. That song, basically, I wrote it at an airport at night and it wasn't very busy and it had that kind of weird, eerie, cold melancholy to it. I was coming back home and I realised that the home that I was coming back to wasn't the home that I'd left, that something had happened while I'd been away. That song is about being away from home."

Foals have kind of grown big by stealth. Was that always part of the plan?

"There's no plan. Well, there is a plan that we wanna make great fucking music and we wanna play our hearts out on-stage and put on the best show you've seen. That's the plan. To be creatively ambitious. We're lucky that we've been able to do it this long and we've been given the space to grow."

Robert John Photography

C. Duncan

★★★★

Architect

FATCAT. CD/DL/LP

High-end dreampop from classically trained Glaswegian multi-instrumentalist.

Duncan's story is a familiar one. He's spent half his more recent life stuck in a bedroom studio attempting to concoct sounds that astound. And in Duncan's case, he's succeeded. He's not only recorded an album of imaginatively assembled dreamscapes but additionally fashioned one that oozes melodies, tunes that pass the whistle-test; best evidenced on For, a song sparked by a whistled chorus. Vocally, too, Duncan seeks to amaze. The possessor of a pure, breathy, boyish voice, he sounds eminently listenable while in solo mood but when he opts, by multitrack, to become a vocal group, then his creations become irresistible, a case in point being He Believes In Miracles, a track that equates with, maybe, Free Design in full flight. Impressive – and then some.

Fred Dellar

Motörhead

★★★

Bad Magic

UDR MUSIC/MOTÖRHEAD. CD/DL/LP

In their 40th anniversary year, Lemmy and co's 22nd studio album.

Should your camcorder footage of Pamplona's Running Of The Bulls festival need a soundtrack, much of *Bad Magic* will serve. Electricity and Teach Them How To Bleed are the aural equivalent of a good goring; the kind of short sharp shocks at which Lemmy and co still excel. Splendid as it is, there's nothing orchestrated about Brian May's guest solo on The Devil, either. Indeed, it's the most feral flurry of notes May has unleashed in yonks. Lyrically, beating the odds and ultra-violence remain fecund topics for Lemmy ("I'll hit you with a chair," he rasps), but on 'Til The End, a half retreat from everything louder than everything else, he's more reflective, rejecting the 'good' advice of others, and stating "I know myself like no one else." Only a faithful cover of Sympathy For The Devil seems moot.

James McNair

Ducktails

★★★★

St Catherine

DOMINO. CD/DL/LP

Real Estate guitarist's lo-fi side-project delivers soft-focus summer pop.

Begun almost a decade ago as a 4-track project, Duck Tails' fifth full-length release – produced by Elliott Smith collaborator Rob Schnapf – is higher of fi, but still retains the soft-focus smudge that is the group's trademark. The cat's cradle of soft acoustic tangle that made Real Estate's *Atlas* such a treat remains, fringed with warm synth and occasional gossamer strings, remembered-from-a-dream harmonies from Julia Holter, and Matt Mondanile's sweet, cloud-gazing vocals. Soaked in melody and blessedly unhurried, the songs' sunkissed choruses nuzzle darker verses, with lyrics that ponder faith (Heaven's Room, St Catherine) and disappointment (The Laughing Woman). The devil's in the details, be it the drum machine patterns that propel Church or the lush pedal-augmented textures of Medieval, while the instrumentals that open and close the album aren't simple throwaways but highlights, testament to Ducktails' hazily mysterious charm, pairing sweetly pliant pop with electric intrigue.

Stevie Chick

The Cairo Gang

★★★★

Goes Missing

GOD?/DRAG CITY. CD/DL/LP

Fourth album from erstwhile Bonnie 'Prince' Billy foil.

As the sometime Sundance Kid to Will Oldham's Butch Cassidy, it's no surprise that Emmett Kelly should be a master rock and role player. But none of this LA-native's previous recordings as The Cairo Gang have unleashed the zeal which powers *Goes Missing*'s formidable arsenal of psych-pop tropes beyond mere able retro-maquillage and implant deep beneath the skin. Perhaps its secret lies in Kelly's readiness to pollute his melodies' mellow fruitfulness. Thus, amidst the preposterously ebullient Gene Clark rush of Be What You Are, Kelly stokes his inner outsider: "I want to be the only one around that don't belong here." There's heaps more in that vein, stinging Rickenbacker powerpop heroism and Zombies harmonics amid brooding laments for love affairs that don't make second base (note also the audacious cover of 1944 Broadway standard Some Other Time). Surely the sweetly sour bubblegum album of 2015.

Keith Cameron

Refused

★★★

Freedom

EPITAPH. CD/DL/LP

Swedish hardcore idealists get accessible on their first album in 17 years.

Refused's 1998 album, *The Shape Of Punk To Come*, remains a post-hardcore landmark. Incisively anti-capitalist, it was recorded once they'd made the decision to split, intended as their last will and testament. While their legend has since grown, Refused have wrestled with becoming a band again. Doubts have finally been banished with this fourth album – a leaner, more radio-friendly effort with two tracks written by Swedish pop maven Shellback (Taylor Swift's Shake It Off), though his involvement has little to do with the band's newfound directness. Unwilling to simply repeat themselves, this time they clearly want their message to be heard. Early-day fans may decry the arena-baiting riffs, but frontman Dennis Lyxzén continues to tackle the big issues – neo-colonialism (Françafrique) to the class system (War On The Palaces). Refused still have something to say.

Phil Alexander

"I'll hit you with a chair": Motörhead cast new spell.

Downtempo treat: Dan Auerbach's Arcs reach a peak.

Keys to the darkside

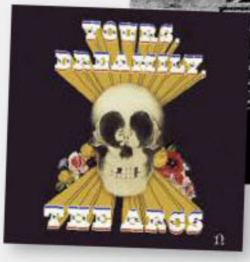
Dan Auerbach's new parallel band bring easy rockin' weirdness. By Andrew Perry.

The Arcs

★★★★

Yours, Dreamily

NONESUCH. CD/DL/LP



THE ONLY faltering moment in The Black Keys' inexorable upward incline came in 2009. Drummer Patrick Carney flipped out when he discovered that singer/guitarist Dan Auerbach had cut a solo album without telling him – it was even called *Keep It Hid*. The duo soon patched up their differences, hit paydirt with 2010's *Brothers*, cracked radio with 2011's extra-poppy *El Camino*, and scored their first US Number 1 with last year's *Turn Blue*.

Between those big-hitters, Auerbach, their creative motor, has never made a solo follow-up, preferring to 'produce' for Dr. John and Lana Del Rey, which involved co-writing, instrumental contributions, and providing his own team of sessioneers. On the genre-busting *Keep It Hid* he was plainly trying out moves that lay beyond his main band's remit. The Lana project, with its guaranteed mass listenership, obviously plundered his top-level pop resources; accordingly, perhaps, *Turn Blue* was a moody beggar, but for its two knockout hits.

This Arcs record, meanwhile, was born out of tour cancellations when Carney dislocated his shoulder in January. Debuting a full new band Auerbach assembled with sometime BK touring keyboard player Leon Michels, it's his least contrasting side project to date as it transports *Turn Blue*'s spooked, soulful vibe further out to often cosmic dimensions, usually via outré synth noises, echoes and wibbly-wobbly effects, which light up the sound with lysergic potency.

Dan has talked of his joy at "making music without responsibility", and having honed his tunesmithery during 13 years on the job he's now practically incapable of penning something not infectious. Fronting the album after a weird-beard intro passage, Outta My Mind sets off at a beat-pop clip, with fabulous nutcase-wins lyrics ("I heard I lost my self-control, but everything I did went an' turned to gold") and a chorus to rival Lonely Boy.

By and large, as per its title, *Yours, Dreamily* is a downtempo treat, tailor-made for sundazed summer evening drives with the windows down. At its most out-there, Everything You Do (You Do For You) imagines Tom Waits doing 'cubist reggae', instead of 'cubist funk', its submarine strangeness lent an extra chill by Auerbach's frosty musings on human selfishness, which may or may not pertain to the divorce which preoccupied him on *Turn Blue*.

For all the occasional paranoia, the vibes are mostly sexy, slinky, even desert-like. Another key flavour is added by Mariachi Flor de Toloache, an all-female New York troupe who lend touches of Mex brass, and on Nature's Child, sweet nu-soul singing, while Auerbach delivers up some of his hottest-ever guitar – on The Arc, he winningly fuzzes up Dire Straits' Money For Nothing riff. "Is anything we do ever gonna last?" he wonders on Searching The Blue. This one, for sure, is a keeper.

YEARS & YEARS
COMMUNION

Years & Years

★★★

Communion

POLYDOR. CD/DL/LP

Much-touted synth poppers play it safe on debut outing.

Rapidly winning converts through social media and their scooping of the BBC Sound Of 2015 award, the smooth rise of London trio Years & Years has already seen them bag a Number 1 single with King in March this year. In spite of the band's avowed love of Radiohead, this is pretty much straightforward electronic R&B/pop, with a side order of late '80s deep house, high on lovelorn emotion and Radio 1-friendly hooks, but lacking in real character or interesting sonic twists. Frontman Olly Alexander has an impressively soulful voice, and it's accomplished stuff, for sure, if a little one-dimensional and predictable. The hits may well keep rolling in for Years & Years, but next time a bit more adventure wouldn't go amiss.

Tom Doyle

Albert Hammond Jr.

★★★★

Momentary Masters

INFECTIOUS MUSIC UK. CD/DL/LP

The Strokes' guitar and keyboards guy finally follows-up 2008's *¿Como Te Llama?*

After 18 months of rehab/writer's block, Albert Hammond Jr.'s creativity rebooted with One Way Trigger, penned for The Strokes' 2013 LP, *Comedown Machine*. Now here's his third solo album, its title cribbed from Carl Sagan's Pale Blue Dot and riffing on the truism "that every triumph is fleeting". Spry and spontaneous sounding, the record was hatched at Hammond's One Way Studios around leisurely dinners and frisbee games, but its chipper lattices of Afro-pop, funked-up Strokes-speak and power pop are spiked with lyrical melancholy, partly because the record's mysterious dedicatee, Sara, a cherished touchstone who introduced Hammond to the poetry of Anne Sexton, has since passed away. That Hammond's voice has improved since his last solo outing is clear, and indelible melodies elevate Losing Touch and Born Slippy. Naturally, there's a wealth of pithy guitar-work, too.

James McNair

the maccabees

The Maccabees

★★★★

Marks To Prove It

FICTION. CD/DL/LP

Spirited London quintet hits creative stride on their fourth album.

Emerging from the mass of indie landfill bands in 2005, The Maccabees always sounded like they had more to them than just jerky, frenetic guitar rock, as proved by the creative advances made on 2012's *Given To The Wild*. On *Marks To Prove It*, they continue to add further light and shade to their sound, with the gorgeous melody of Kamakura drifting off into a dream pop reverie and Spit It Out building from Erik Satie piano figures into the kind of thumping anthem likely to appeal to those who preferred Arcade Fire before they stepped onto the dancefloor. Throughout, singer Orlando Weeks is a shapeshifting presence – *Nashville Skyline* Dylan in Something Like Happiness, Mark Hollis in the lovely Talk Talk-like closer Dawn Chorus. The overall sense is of a spirited and inventive band truly coming into their own.

Tom Doyle

Beach House

★★★

Depression Cherry

BELLA UNION. CD/DL/LP

On their fifth album, the Baltimore duo gently ring the changes.

Since 2010's *Teen Dream*, Beach House have faced a persistent issue: how can a band who have so perfectly crystallised their own sound continue without sinking into repetition or going up in flames? Their fourth album, *Bloom*, just about answered the question with minute variations and deft finessing, Alex Scally and Victoria Legrand staring down doubters as if asking why they would want such loveliness to change. Three years on, *Depression Cherry* makes another quarter turn, as recognisable as any band featuring Legrand's struck-bell voice must be, but more sparing with the muzzy bohemia, stately timbre and nostalgic echo. They can't always resist their old ways, as autumn processional PPP shows, but Legrand's vocals feel sweeter and closer, while the rusted beats of 10.37 and Days Of Candy's choral cascade prove how much beauty Beach House can generate with a careful adjustment of the dials.

Victoria Segal

beach house
depression cherry

Richard Swift

Something of a sandwich: Yo La Tengo, stuff like this here.

Dream interpretations

Covers versions, new songs and reworkings of the group's back catalogue. By Mike Barnes.

Yo La Tengo

★★★★

Stuff Like That There

MATADOR. CD/DL/LP

THE VIDEO for Ohm from Yo La Tengo's last album, 2013's *Fade*, is an animation which starts with a teacher writing a question on the board: What Is Yo La Tengo? A girl in the class starts writing a long and exceptionally complicated equation using names like Nancy Sinatra, Tender Trap, Modest Mouse, Thelonious Monk, Toni Basil, Captain Beefheart and Lambchop – to varying levels of seriousness. The end product is a sandwich that's opened up to reveal the band playing inside.

As well as all being very droll, it's rather apt for a group whose own essentially simple songs come with sonics that range from the hushed emanations of a couple of instruments, to keyboard and guitar blow-outs, to lavish string arrangements, and who have, more importantly, attempted cover versions of just about every musical genre known to humankind. And this is where we are with *Stuff Like That There*, which deliberately nods back to a format first employed on their 1990 album *Fakebook*.

Although there is a 25-year gap between these releases they feel like companion pieces, as both find the group stripping back their instrumentation to drums played with brushes, double bass, acoustic guitar and some sweet electric lead by returning guitarist Dave Schramm. In doing so they focus more on the song itself, letting it create its own atmosphere.

For example, The Ballad Of Red Buckets, from their 1995 album *Electr-O-Pura*, originally had a buzzing psychedelic vibe with organ and guitar like early Stereolab meets early Spiritualized. On this new version, there is interplay between Ira Kaplan's acoustic guitars and Schramm's tremolo'd electric lead, together with Kaplan and singing drummer Georgia Hubley's cool countryish harmonising.

Stuff Like That There begins with Darlene McCrea's My Heart's Not In it, the original's breezy mid-'60s pop-soul rendered more melancholic in Hubley's spare version. A new group song, Rickety, is followed by a take on Hank Williams's I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry, each song beautifully played and sung. A cover of The Cure's Friday I'm In Love is more animated, but sounds more bitter-sweet than the original's rather goofy charm.

The Parliaments' doo wop number I Can Feel The Ice Melting and the very early Sun Ra tune Somebody's In Love also translate easily into Yo La Tengo's sweet, spangly soundworld.

The concept is a bit arch and it's easy to get overly trainspotter-ish with this kind of venture, so this writer listened through a couple of times without reading any information and apart from some obviously recognisable moments it sounded like a quality Yo La Tengo album. Which is ultimately what matters.

So what *is* Yo La Tengo? Still something of a sandwich, it seems.

Carlton Melton

★★★

Out To Sea

AGITATED. CD/DL/LP

San Fran psychedelicists map the place where the ocean meets the sky.

Maintaining their place at contemporary psychedelic rock's fore-front, Carlton Melton's latest long-player is another far-reaching expedition into lysergic mind expansion. Produced and assisted by Trans Am's Phil Manley, with additional mastering from John 'Evil Acidhead' McBain, this wholly instrumental opus takes manifold forms as it veers between ear-searing sprawl and consciousness-consuming calm, riff-driven oblivion and gentle kosmische currents. While tracks like Peaking Duck, Wheel And Deal and The Barrier make a strong case for unadulterated heaviness, the group's softer, more meditative side shows through on Diamond In The Rough, Too Close To Home and Similarities, the latter dissolving in reverb and repetition like a drowsy Spacemen 3 jam. Anyone looking to soundtrack a trip to the other side of the horizon will be well rewarded here.

Andrew Carden

The Phoenix Foundation

★★★★

Give Up Your Dreams

MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES. CD/DL/LP

Electronic overhaul for New Zealand's pop-psych torchbearers.

Last time around, Wellington's beardiest voyagers expanded their horizons on *Fandango*, a double album. Fifteen years in, they've gone inward, triggered partly by new drummer Chris O'Connor, toward a more rhythm-led model of heightened melodic exuberance. Celestial Bodies, riding squirly synth and breathy R&B vocal triggers over inch-perfect beats, and Silent Orb's contemporised sunshine pop retain little of their dark'n'breezy guitar origins, yet songs and melody remain paramount in this irresistible Technicolor world. And there's an expert halfway point between old and new in the title track – an ironic paean to the tribulations of a touring band many miles from home – and even Mountain's coursing Afro-Latin kick. Other inspirations – lost Chilean tribes in a spiralling Playing Dead, sixth century philosopher Saint Isidore in Myth's conjoining of The Beach Boys and Animal Collective – add to the stew of groovy ideas.

Martin Aston

Haiku Salut

★★★★

Etch And Etch Deep

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE LOVED. CD/DL/LP

Second album of inventive soundscaping from Peak District instrumentalists.

2013's *Tricolore* debut found Gemma Barkerwood, Sophie Barkerwood and Louise Croft parlaying rasping accordion, twinkling Casio keyboards, perky ukuleles and eccentric percussion into a playfully compelling folktronica that somehow joined the dots between *nouvelle vague* soundtrack and children's TV theme. Its successor inhabits similar territory but ups the ante, with palpable hints of Beirut (You Dance A Particular Algorithm), múm (Divided By Surfaces And Silence), Yann Tiersen (Hearts Not Parts) and Eno's *Another Green World* (Becauselessness). On tracks like Doing Better and Things Were Happening And They Were Strange, with their rapturous pianos, nylon string guitars and cooing, wordless vocal descants, they judiciously marry Durutti Column lyricism to Morricone melodrama. And while their beloved accordion can occasionally feel a little like a gauchely rustic interloper at a cool, cosmopolitan art party, this is an album that seduces as readily as it challenges.

David Sheppard

The Last Hurrah!

★★★★

Mudflowers

RUNE GRAMMOFON. CD/LP

Cosmic America finds an unlikely but natural home in west Norway.

In the mid '70s, Bergen birthed The Flying Norwegians. Named in tribute to the Burritos, these Nordic rough riders ploughed a very satisfying country rock furrow. Now, with his third album as The Last Hurrah!, the same town's producer and songwriter HP Gundersen – who was behind the boards for Tim Rose's final album and the Madrugada hit Lift Me – takes up where they left off to bring America's Cosmic Music back to Bergen. On the extraordinary *Mudflowers*, he's helped by a Transatlantic cast including sister vocalists Maesa (who also records solo) and Rosa Pullman (half of the duo Mitch And Rosa) and pedal steel player Marty Rifkin. With cracked reveries, Hammond-assisted country rock, psychedelic, Van Dyke Parks-style Americana and wig-out guitar solos, the thrill-packed *Mudflowers* – as unlikely as it seems – will be high on 2015's American best-of lists.

Kieron Tyler

Hauschka

★★★★

2.11.2014

CITY SLANG. CD/DL/LP

Versatile live improvs from outré German pianist Volker Bertelmann, aka Hauschka.

A limited edition vinyl release, *2.11.2014* documents a mesmeric Hauschka performance given on that date on the Japanese island of Kyushu. Based loosely on tracks from 2014's *Abandoned City*, it proffers two lengthy extemporisations that run the gamut of his playfully rhythmic, John Cage-indebted armoury of prepared piano sounds, filtered through a lavish panoply of electronic dub effects. Such is the dexterity of the playing, and the fidelity of the recording, that this could easily be a studio album; indeed, at times, it is hard to believe that this is a solitary improviser at a grand piano, albeit a considerably modified one, with miscellaneous objects wedged into the strings and ping pong balls rattling atop them. With implicit nods to Philip Glass, Keith Jarrett and electronic dance music along the way, this is compelling evidence of a singular modern composer-performer in his pomp.

David Sheppard

Various

★★★★

Amplificador

FAR OUT RECORDINGS. CD/DL/LP

Seventeen to watch out for from the vast jungles of the Brazilian underground.

AMPLIFICADOR
NOVISSIMA
musica
BRASILEIRA

Whatever they put in the coffee over there, it seems to broaden the mind: at a time when musical production, distillation and consumption have exploded, *Amplificador* is a Brazilian music website dedicated to finding the best, unheralded sounds in the fifth-largest country on the planet. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, there is an obvious African consciousness in the grooves: the Abayomy and Zebrabeat orchestras clearly love Afrobeat, but there are also Zulumbi's voodoo groove and the desert blues of André Sampaio E Os Afromandingo. Elsewhere, Ive Seixas presents a folky samba; DJ Dolores – arguably the best-known of all the acts here – harness New Order's motorik beat to big-band funk; The Baggios wonder what would happen if you add brass to the (no longer quite so surprising) guitar/drums line-up. The Tropicalistas are cited as influences: their experimental spirit lives.

David Hutcheon

Gwenno

★★★★

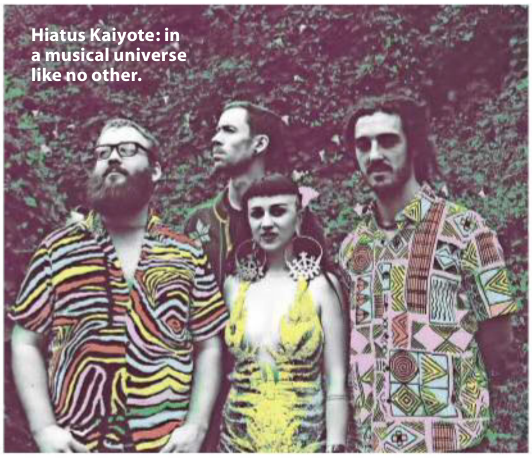
Y Dydd Olaf

HEAVENLY. CD/DL/LP

Ex-Pipettes' Meek-Oram-Derbyshire-sci-fi-inspired album, in Welsh.

Named after a 1970s sci-fi novel, *Y Dydd Olaf* (The Last Day) is at once spooky and playful, romantic and angry – like most of the best science fiction, in fact. Golau Arall (based on Welsh hymn Ar Hyd Y Nos) starts with tickling guitar and creepy panting, then soars and swirls about like a demon. Sisial Y Môr is dreamy, almost resigned, then it springs a glorious Horrors-like synth swoon. Stand-out Fratolish Hiang Perpeshki is dead cool and a bit daft, with ungainly melodies from a toy keyboard and a soaring/melancholic sing-along chorus. Most of us can't sing along, however, because – key fact – this album is sung in Welsh, except for one track (Amser) that's in Cornish, making the whole feel even more sci-fi: mixing an ancient, bucolic language with otherworldly dance music is a genius move.

Anna Wood



Hiatus Kaiyote: in a musical universe like no other.

Andy Morgan

Hiatus Kaiyote

★★★★

Choose Your Weapon

FLYING LOTUS/SONY. CD/DL/LP

Spacey Antipodean neo-soul band on target.

One of Australia's more esoteric musical exports, this Melbourne quartet scored a Grammy nomination last year for Nakamarra, their collaboration with rapper Q-Tip. They're fronted by the alluring presence of singer/guitarist, Nai Palm, whose eye-grabbing sartorial preferences seem directly inspired by the post-apocalyptic couture depicted in the Mad Max films. Style is one thing, substance another, of course, but on this second album the group combine both to mesmerising effect. Palm's astral vocals are the main focus: soulfully sinuous with Erykah Badu-like jazzy inflections, they waft over shifting musical backdrops that surprise with their sudden changes of tempo and ability to morph from soul and jazz to trippy hip hop and Blade Runner soundscapes. At 70 minutes long, there's a lot to digest but it's worth persevering with as repeated listens gradually unveil a musical universe unlike any other.

Charles Waring

Joshua Abrams

★★★★

Magnetoception

EREMITE. DL/LP

Categorisation-challenging double LP from innovative Chicago bassist and friends.

Josh Abrams is perhaps best known for providing the low end in turn-of-the-millennium minimalist improvising quartet Town & Country, but his adaptable skills have long graced Chicago's post-rock/outer-jazz multiverse. Under his own name he's released a brace of compelling albums that alloy freeform jazz, classical minimalism, ambient drone and African music. Now *Magnetoreception* builds on those predecessors' promise, an adroit ensemble including percussionist Hamid Drake, guitarist Jeff Parker and harmonium player Lisa Alvarado helping Abrams forge lengthy, immersive pieces based around his upright bass, celeste and guimbri (a three-stringed African lute). The opener, By Way Of Odessa, is 16 minutes of restrained, steady state drift set the contemplative, richly textured tone, while the more urgent Translucent marries Tortoise-like riffs to African township jazz and the title track's scuttling intensity brilliantly evokes the symphonic clamour of cities at rush hour.

David Sheppard

WORLD

BY DAVID HUTCHEON

SECKOU KEITA
22
STRINGS
CORDES

Seckou Keita

★★★★

22 Strings/22 Cordes

ARC. CD/DL

Senegalese kora star in the making goes solo.

LAST YEAR, Seckou Keita announced his arrival in the big league with the superb *Clychau Dibon*, an album of duets with Catrin Finch after a series of misfortunes caused Toumani Diabaté to miss out on sessions with the Welsh harp-player. Now it looks as if the Senegalese virtuoso might be after the Malian's King of the Kora crown. His restraint is the key: without getting flashy, Keita paints great panoramic pictures over the course of 10 tunes, instrumentally telling stories that are clear to follow – it's all in the feel. Even if you don't understand the Susu language, you'll still get the gist of the musician's search for his father in Mikhi Nathan Mu-Toma (The Invisible Man); you'll still comprehend the curiosity around his grandfather's nickname in Tatono. Keita sings a bit, too, but that's just an extra string to his bow.

ALSO RELEASED

Pascal Comelade + Les Limiñanas

★★★★

Traité De Guitarres Triolectiques

BECAUSE. CD/DL/LP

As if to mark Comelade's 40th anniversary in showbusiness, and armed with toy pianos, kazoos, imitation Theremin and plastic guitars (plus more conventional weapons), the three French veterans take a Fuzzy Felt blow-torch to garage rock. The results sound both play-school friendly and threateningly, thrillingly demented (their Ramblin' Rose would spook both Jerry Lee Lewis and the MC5).

Flavia Coelho

★★★★

Mundo Meu

MR BONGO. CD/DL/LP

This could only have been recorded by a Brazilian: Caribbean hip hop, reggae, bossa nova and jazz in a voice that sizzles. How did Coelho get so clued-in so young? She's the daughter of a hairdresser to Rio's drag queens – perhaps that explains how and why this sassy pop mélange explodes with a sense of fun from the first second.

Pat Thomas & Kwashibu Area Band

★★★★

Pat Thomas

STRUT. CD/DL/LP

With Ebo Taylor also back in the groove, it's been a heartening year for Ghana's highlife veterans; now Taylor's old Sweet Beans compadre Pat Thomas (a 1970s star and ringer for Isaac Hayes) has recorded a perfect summer album. Odoo Be Ba (with Tony Allen on drums, great guitars and the happiest of horns) is the one to soundtrack your barbecue.

Hindi Zahra

★★★★

Homeland

PARLOPHONE. CD/DL/LP

After rather disappointing live shows in 2010 – they were brimming with rock clichés – the Berber singer vanished. Now, however, it seems she was searching for plan B, found it in the mountains of Morocco and recorded it in Marrakesh. Redemption beckons: the results are eerie, angry and dramatic as hell; this is still a rock album, but with a definite northern African diaspora perspective. *DH*

Enigma's variations: Destroyer Dan Bejar keeps a straight face.

Toxic avenger

Sometime New Pornographer overthrows rote indie rock on his best LP yet. By Danny Eccleston.

Destroyer

★★★★

Poison Season

DEAD OCEANS. CD/DL/LP

DESTROYER'S DAN Bejar can now officially retire the mantle of Rock's Most Exasperating Artist. Since his accidental discovery of the uses of pop on 2011's *Kaputt* album – songs that referenced his love of mid-'80s British indie caressed with mid-'80s major label production glister – he has yet to turn back to the skronky old days when he reckoned that "tuning is junk".

This late-blooming congeniality may have achieved its apotheosis on *Poison Season* – a more unbuttoned record than its predecessor but held in place at the beginning, middle and end by three alternative reworkings of a song called Times Square. It's full of wistful and lovely music, whose free spirit is exemplified by Dream Lover, a trumpet-strewn, life-loving whoop like The Waterboys and the E Street Band in a food fight. Elsewhere, on the limpid The River, ethereal jazz-pop 'workout' Archer On The Beach (with its shades of Sade's *Diamond Life*, an album Bejar holds a torch for) and Broadway-tinged Girl In A Sling, he's gone all-out for transfixing beauty, while on Hell, where perky strings mesh with quirky brass, there are echoes of Van Dyke Parks's baroque tapestries.

Bejar is wordy like Parks, too. He'll relish an unwieldy non-sequitur like "Every murderer voted out of office is sold down the river" before indulging in the self-deprecating drollery of "Baby it's dumb. Look what I've become – scum" (shades, surely, of his hero Morrissey). He insists that this album is more personal than the last, but his vernacular is obscure so how could we know? He seems beset by angst – deathbeds, bitter tears, "suffering everywhere" – but also struck by hope and the silliness of things. "Stars blink. Stars go wild and expire. Stars get made from fire." Life goes on.

Vancouver born and bred but of Spanish descent, Bejar has more of the look of a European professor or a poet than a pop star, and his singing has a kind of strange, brittle fastidiousness that, once its hooks are in, keeps you coming back. The poker face is part of the joke, like that ridiculous moniker, but beyond that, it's hard to fathom what Bejar wants or what he's trying to achieve. No bad thing, perhaps, when enigmas are in short supply.

The biggest mistake would be to presume irony where none – or very little – is meant. Some of Destroyer's current sonic signposts tack toward what surface-skimmers might mistake for yacht rock, but there's nothing bland about this fervid, ideasy album, or for instance, the soul-filled J.P. Carter trumpet solo that ends the hazy-sunny Bangkok with a flourish. Bejar appears to have stumbled on one of those magical moments when an interesting singer-songwriter meets a perfectly simpatico band. They're right to sound like they're enjoying it.

Mac DeMarco

★★★★

Another One

CAPTURED TRACKS. CD/DL/LP

Eight new songs from Canada's rumpled singer-songwriter princeling.

Heart, her, me, hers: scan the repetitive titles of these eight tracks and Mac DeMarco doesn't really seem to be stretching the pop lexicon with his brisk follow-up to last year's *Salad Days*. What he mines from that standard vocabulary, however, is golden, brushed and burnished songs that largely mute any slacker zaniness to explore the traditions of heartbreak. A Heart Like Hers and Without Me sound like they are dissolving on the spot, porous guitars and DeMarco's hesitant phrasing ("Long as I know she's happy… happy…without me") leaving unsteady and treacherous gaps. The Way You'd Love Her and Another One, roughly conventional tales of lost love and romantic yearning, are destabilised by half-melted guitars, the sense that behind these sweet and splendid songs, there's somebody only just holding it together. The surface of *Another One* is pure pleasure; underneath, it's not quite so easy.

Victoria Segal

The Pretty Things

★★★★

The Sweet Pretty Things (Are In Bed Now Of Course…)

REPERTOIRE. CD/DL

The veteran rockers hit form on their first new studio album in eight years.

With vocalist Phil May recuperated from a near fatal lung illness that struck last year and currently getting stuck into a busy touring schedule, it seems that The Pretty Things – with May and guitarist Dick Taylor from the original line-up – will simply keep on rocking until the last rites are read. This album is pretty much a live-in-the-studio creation with vintage everything: valve amps, guitars, bass and drums. Its raw, red-blooded sound nods back to The Pretty Things' '60s and '70s heyday, playing exactly to their strengths with absolutely no attempt towards spurious 'modernity'. Psychedelic mellotron rears out of the mix during Dark Days, while Hell, Here And Nowhere is a gnarly acoustic blues that blossoms into a chorus with vocal harmonies. All the spontaneity does admittedly yield some sketchy moments, but this is an almost unfeasibly vital offering.

Mike Barnes

Iris DeMent

★★★

The Trackless Woods

FLARIELLA. CD/DL

A little nip of vodka for revered US singer-songwriter.

Iris DeMent has a stark, unlovely voice but one that pulls you in then squeezes your emotional button until you truly believe. This time around, she uses it to convert the works of Russian poet Anna Akhmatova to provide a melodic connection to the homeland of her teenage daughter, Dasha, whom DeMent adopted from Russia when she was six. Though the results are not always easy to take – several of the 18 tracks hang DeMent's emotive vocals out to dry against the backdrop of just drawing-room piano – the sense of folk and country pervades each and every performance, saving the day. And when DeMent ups gears, as she does on the ultra-friendly Listening To Singing or the powerhouse, gospel-infused stomp that is From An Airplane, then it's easy to comprehend why she is admired by many.

Fred Dellar

Tim Bowness

★★★

Stupid Things That Mean The World

INSIDE OUT MUSIC. CD/DL/LP

Includes contributions from Peter Hammill, Anna Phoebe and Phil Manzanera.

Both solo and with No-Man, Tim Bowness has always evoked transience and place in his songs. On Know That You Were Loved he contrasts "crumbing cup cakes of love" with "Truculent dinners, fraught family affairs", to the sighing of steel guitars and Andrew Keeling's spectral strings, and At The End Of The Holiday he tells of an awkward young woman by the sea, in the poignant space "before real life feels real again", to a gentle drum figure and guitar filigrees. Given the beautifully played and finely wrought music and lyrics, this might seem a bit churlish, but if only it made more use of dynamics. Bowness's delivery on the more subdued material tends to revisit similar melodic cadences, but when the musicians inject more energy, as on The Great Electric Teenage Dream and the gorgeous Sing To Me, the music is transported to a different level.

Mike Barnes

Tim Bowness
Stupid Things That Mean The World

Brian Lopez

★★★

Static Noise

FUNZALO/INDIA. CD/DL/LP

Second album from eclectic Tucson singer-writer.

There's something Jeff Buckleyesque about Lopez's voice – its purity, dynamism and range but also that retro feel, a sense of being not of its time. Oh, and they both have a way with ballads. There were several fine examples on the sometime Giant Sand member and KT Tunstall accompanist's debut *Ultra* (2012). And they're here too: bluesy gospel When I Was A Mountain; spare, haunting World Unknown; Wrong Or Right, a late-night slow-dancer looking for a David Lynch film to soundtrack; folk rock Persephone, on which Lopez sounds like a one-man Simon & Garfunkel. But mostly it rocks – in all sorts of ways and all of them '60s: from psychedelic opener Mercury In Retrograde and catchy classic pop Modern Man, to a cover (with surf guitar) of The Zombies' She's Not There.

Sylvie Simmons

Black

★★★

Blind Faith

NERO SCHWARZ. CD/DL

Moody muso making his way, 28 years on from the wonderful Wonderful Life.

Strange to think of Colin Vearncombe in his fifties, perceptions of him are probably frozen in time by that great dreamy hit. But his voice, one of those romance-the-phone-book instruments like Scott Walker's or Paul Buchanan's, remains the same. And, writing with Calum MacColl (Kirsty's brother), he offers surprises too. The turmoil and broken relationship songs – The Love Show, Sleep Together and When It's Over – come spiked with sour, half-note strings or vocal insinuations cutting across the sensual ardour of lines like, "Slip the white dress from your shoulders/To let it fall like virgin snow." But then, sounding elegant as ever, you find he's singing of "sin", "sick romance" and "Your dark disease/The one nobody wants to know" (Beautiful). Sugared vinegar.

Phil Sutcliffe

Aero Flynn

★★★★

Aero Flynn

MEMPHIS INDUSTRIES. CD/DL/LP

Solo debut from Justin Vernon's "ambassador of my heart for many years".

There's a (bitter) sweet spot between Radiohead and Bon Iver's electronic-flecked intimacy, and Josh Scott has found it. Crippled by autoimmune disorder and insecurities, Bon Iver's Eau Claire scene collaborator had lain low since his band Amateur Love folded almost a decade ago, but with encouragement and a band including Iver sidekicks Sean Carey and Mike Noyce, Scott has re-surfaced as Aero Flynn. Amateur Love's rickety tension is revamped with layers of both fuzzy warmth and starker urgency, with Scott's vocals more ghostly frail, doubtless a product of why he's been hiding. Plates2 perfectly sets the scene, a soft thrumming epistle that builds with band detail and a jazzy-snaky guitar coda; while Twist positively swims in reverb and tiny embellishments. Maker's vocal may be a Thom Yorke-like, falsetto lift-included, but that equidistant spellbound bittersweet spot is Aero Flynn's outright.

Martin Aston

Thar he blows: Fred Abbott, new wave of the sleaziest sort.

Fred Abbott

★★★★

Serious Poke

LOJINX. CD/DL

Noah And The Whale lead guitarist rocks out.

NATW began as twee indie-folk-poppers, blossoming late into sleek drive-time rock. Now the band's over, multi-instrumentalist and Jarvis Cocker lookalike Fred Abbott is first off the blocks with a solo outing; and it's so 1990s Tom Petty (Abbott's a fan) you have to double-check that the guy's from Twickenham, not Gainesville. From the first ringing electric guitar yelp and strained, Ric Ocasek-type vocal howl, this is a skinny-tied new wave of the sleaziest sort. Hollywood is precariously close to Van Halen's Jump, with a truly killer riff; Funny How Good It Feels is coolly unreconstructed, laughing its head off about the freedom of saying sayonara; and Learn About Love caps that, because "when you unwind, baby, you unravel". But for all the wild nights and drunken fuck-ups, tracks like Lucky People have the open-hearted emotional clout of Randy Newman. Barnstormingly pokey.

Glyn Brown

Anna Laube

★★★★

Anna Laube

AHH...POCKETS. CD/DL

Third album from an Americana trailblazer.

Sometimes I browse through old copies of Sing Out, recalling the era when folk merged into pop and the world seemed populated by songs written at campfire get-togethers to provide a new era of American standards. Anna Laube's music seems to have been inspired by those same pages. A singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist who's travelled from Iowa to California, via Wisconsin, Texas, Hawaii and Belgium, where she studied oboe, Laube's voice offers innocent allure on such ear-friendly material as Already There and Oh My! (Oh Me Oh Me Oh My), though she can handle sharp-as-a-tack blues like You Ain't Worth My Time Anymore, which sweeps ever-forward as it rides an organ wail, with Laube playing great mouth harp. Country, folk and jazz are all in the mix – Laube recycles the whole Americana genre in a refreshing and impressive manner.

Fred Dellar

FOLK

BY COLIN IRWIN

PALEY & SON
Featuring
TOM & BEN PALEY
With
CERYS MATTHEWS
BJ COLE &
ROB MASON

Tom & Ben Paley

★★★★

Paley & Son

HORNBEAM. CD/DL

American old-time institution with fiddle-playing son Ben plus Cerys Matthews and BJ Cole along for the ride.

IT'S OVER 60 years since Tom Paley first mined the American old-time tradition with John Cohen and Mike Seeger in The New Lost City Ramblers. A former Woody Guthrie compadre, he's been adopted as a British folk treasure since relocating to London in 1966, and now in his eighties his vitality and enduring passion for this music is self-evident. This is no sentimental lap of honour: among blazing fiddle tunes and mischievous takes on the legacy of Charlie Poole and Clarence Ashley (This Train, Little Sadie, Three Men Went A-Hunting), Paley's voice is full of cracked expression, while Ben's fiddle whips things along. Add a gentle smattering of Cerys Matthews harmonies, some lovely BJ Cole dobro and an enlightened variety of guitars, banjos, double bass, harmonica and percussion, it completes a heart-warming mix.

ALSO RELEASED

Keston Cobblers Club

★★★★

Wildfire

TRICOLOUR. CD/DL

They have been tipping KCC for great things for a while and for once 'they' may be right. Hitherto a quirky left-field folk being, this beautifully assembled assortment of clever hooks, galloping percussion and oddball lyrics has crossover potential written all over it. Nothing is overly obvious or over-produced, offering an agreeable suggestion of eccentricity as the poppier choruses seep into your brain.

Qristina & Quinn Bachand

★★★★

Little Hinges

FACTOR. CD/DL

This young duo from Canada shows thrilling virtuosity on fiddle and guitar/banjo while displaying great freshness and originality in their approach to Celtic music. Qristina is also a fabulous singer and the way they guide us through pure traditional playing on Crooked Jack into experimental arrangements with subtle electronic atmospherics and an almost Lanois-esque production of Hang Me and Three Little Babes is startling.

Megan Henwood

★★★

Head, Heart, Hand

DHARMA. CD/DL

Six years since she won the BBC Young Folk Award and four on from a debut album, *Making Waves*, that had critics reaching for Laura Marling comparisons, Megan Henwood returns with an album laced with angst and darkness. It might easily be dismissed as the regulation lyrical indulgence of a pained singer/songwriter, but its saving graces are imaginative and superbly executed arrangements and Henwood's heartbreaking voice.

Calan

★★★

Dinas

SAIN. CD/DL

Now that Welsh is the new Irish, five-piece Calan might hope to be promoted to Celtic royalty with a full-blooded album that marries the Welsh language tradition with fiery instrumental sets and a touch of modernity. There's great fiddle playing from Angharad Sian Jenkins, tender vocals from Bethan Williams-Jones, fine tunes, smooth production, rip-roaring rhythms, no little charm, and step dancing too… what's not to like? *CI*

Laurie Lewis

FILTER ALBUMS

Cecile Cassel aka HollySiz: more French than Miley Cyrus.

Dimitri Coste

Alternative TV

★★★★

Opposing Forces

PUBLIC DOMAIN. CD

First-rate comeback from one of punk's great thinkers.

ALTERNATIVE TV
OPPOSING FORCES

The stated aim of Alternative TV's first album since 2001's *Revolution*, was, says helmsman Mark Perry, to rid him and his band of the old punk tag. Nevertheless, ATV's tenth album is music as cultural resistance and draws on everything that made Perry great in '77: the anger is genuine; the lyrics are wry and honest; the thinking is outside the box. Over the yowling synth and post-punk rhythms of the title track, he deadpans, "Can you face the realisation that nothing really matters?" On the jarring The Rambling Of Madmen, he muses, "Nowadays we don't call people who hear voices prophets, we say they have schizophrenia." His Sniffin' Glue fanzine and Love Lies Limp assured Perry's place in punk mythology. That he's returned with such a great album is cause for celebration.

Lois Wilson

Georgia

★★★★

Georgia

DOMINO. CD/DL/LP

Thrilling debut from Kate Tempest's versatile former drummer.

On-stage, multi-talented Georgia Barnes sings, dances, plays keys and thumps away on drums; in an album trailer she's seen playing keepy-up football. She made this debut entirely solo, down to the engineering – and that's even before we consider the contents; a polyrhythmic splendour as much Neneh Cherry, The Slits, post-punk and dub as it is 21st century grime, R&B and ragga. Move Systems is a fine example, frenetic and melodic, part-chanted and part-harmony heaven. Hold It's tribal climes could soundtrack an ayahuasca experience, in contrast to Tell Me About It's stripped funk squelch. Occasionally there is so much going on it's dizzying – haunting, vulnerable You is a welcome break. But that's hardly a criticism. Instantly, Georgia is up there alongside Grimes in forward-thinking global pop-modernism – and it's highly doubtful the latter is much cop at keepy-uppy.

Martin Aston

MEMBRANES
DARK MATTER/DARK ENERGY

The Membranes

★★★★

Dark Matter/Dark Energy

CHERRY RED. CD/DL/LP

Blackpool legends return after 25 years.

An epic, cataclysmic set playing host to multitudes of magnificent *Sturm-und-Drang*, *Dark Matter/Dark Energy* is coloured by two events: the switching-on of the Large Hadron Collider and the passing of frontman John Robb's father, the latter grounding the corrugated space-rock escapades inspired by the former. Not that these post-punk veterans have suddenly turned hippy – "The legacy of space travel is a universe full of junk," sneers Robb at one point. Instead they deliver a most contemporaneous carnival of noise. On If You Enter The Arena You Got To Deal With The Lions, a hard-rock rut of a riff is eviscerated of any flab by guitars sharper than piranha teeth, Robb gabbling and roaring like a dusted preacher. In The Graveyard channels *Metal Box*-era PiL to bite down on the cold, hard nub of grief, a moment that proves to be unexpectedly moving, while still threatening to shred your speakers.

Stevie Chick

The Telescopes

★★★

Hidden Fields

TAPETE. CD/DL/LP

Former shoegazing noiseniks continue to get better with age.

One time contemporaries of My Bloody Valentine and Spacemen 3, The Telescopes disappeared from most folk's radar after their second album for Creation in 1992. Resurfacing eight years later under the sole charge of founding frontman Stephen Lawrie, the group have since mined their own seams of exploratory psychedelic noise via numerous limited releases and indie imprints. Now on an eighth full-length album, *Hidden Fields* finds Lawrie drifting back to his black-denim roots with five tracks of distortion heavy, song-based sedation. Steeped in feedback, You Know The Way, Don't Bring Me Round and In Every Sense recall Loop, MBV and The Jesus And Mary Chain. Absence, meanwhile, is a percussion-less wash of buzzsaw reverberations while The Living Things signs off with 15 minutes of head-nodding narcoleptic bliss.

Andrew Carden

JAY JAY JOHANSON

Jay-Jay Johanson

★★★

Opium

KWAIDAN. CD/DL/LP

Swedish avant-gardist remains esoteric.

By his tenth album, it seems Johanson can do this in his sleep. Eerie, melancholic electronica washes over you like waves, each track not so different from the last. Yet it starts so well: Drowsy/Too Young to Say Goodnight (encouraging, in his mid-forties) opens with Johanson's pure, David Sylvian croon, hugged by harmonica then a trippy drum'n'bass beat. It's all muted lust and seductive Scandi sophistication. Moonshine is livelier, almost a Bond soundtrack with brass and nostalgic synths. By Be Yourself, track three, though, the jazz-lite feel is irritating, very Basia circa 1987. Two tracks stand out: I Love Him So details his small son's time in hospital; bitter, spare, then – when the boy's tiny hand holds his finger – filled with emotion. And Celebrate The Wonders is atmospheric, tender and joyous. Cocteau Twins' Robin Guthrie is here somewhere too, though he's hard to spot.

Glyn Brown

HollySiz

★★★

My Name Is

WARNER MUSIC. CD/DL

Infectious French meta-pop from Cécile Cassel.

HOLLYSIZ
MY NAME IS

Whatever she says, HollySiz is actually Cécile Cassel, sister of actor Vincent Cassel. In another sleight of hand, her debut album sounds about as French as Miley Cyrus. This despite much of the music – Cassel writes the lyrics – either being co-written with, or solely, by French singer-songwriter Yodelice. OK, a hybrid of Suzi Quatro's Can The Can and Billy Idol's Rebel Yell, is a junk-shop glam stomp. Bronski Beat's Smalltown Boy is given a Lana Del Rey makeover. She sings "I'll be your Bonnie, you'll be my Clyde" to an electric-country slink on Daisy Duke, paying tribute to The Dukes Of Hazzard's feminine aspect. Naturally, she borrows Ms Duke's tiny denim shorts for the sleeve image. Cassel's hit big in France – largely due to the terrific, all-dancing videos for Come Back To Me and Better Than Yesterday. There's no reason she couldn't do the same here.

Kieron Tyler

The Jesus And Mary Chain

★★★★

Live At Barrowlands

DEMON. CD+LP

On its 30th anniversary, *Psychocandy* performed live, November 21, 2014, Glasgow.

The third of three dates from November 2014 that saw the group play the entirety of their 1985 debut plus a warm-up seven song 'best of' set. It's not the classic line-up of the Reids plus Bobby Gillespie and Douglas Hart. Instead, the brothers are joined by guitarist Phil King, bassist Mark Crozer and drummer Brian Young, but their anarchic spirit is captured over the original LP's 11 tracks. Just Like Honey, You Trip Me Up and Never Understand are the highpoints, the perfect encapsulation of JAMC's exhilarating white noise drenched sweet indie-pop sound. The deluxe edition vinyl, housed in a 40-page hardback book, also has a 10-inch of the prequel set, the contemporaneous Some Candy Talking and Upside Down providing a heady rush, plus a CD of the concert too.

Lois Wilson

CANDY
THE JESUS AND MARY CHAIN

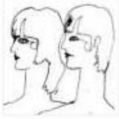
Drinks

★★★★

Hermits On Holiday

HEAVENLY. CD/DL/LP

Transatlantic mind-meld works wonders.



Listening to this collaboration between off-beam Welsh singer-songwriter Cate Le Bon and White Fence mastermind Tim Presley, it can seem like the pair could just as easily have channelled their energies into painting murals of newsreaders' faces, or constructing backyard installations out of Coke bottles and wax. Dry, scratchy and clankingly awkward at times (especially the untethered guitar babble of Tim, Do I Like That Dog), *Hermits On Holiday* replicates the feel of proper outsider art, its creators chewing up words and music like psychedelic wasps, building a nest around themselves to protect a curious internal logic. The tick-tocking title track defines this warped insularity: "Quarter to five/feeding time… Six past the eight/copulate," sings Le Bon guilelessly, while mangled waltz Spilt The Beans descends into yellow-wallpapered paranoia. The Cardiff-LA pairing might be creatively equal, but the sound they make is beautifully out of balance.

Victoria Segal

Stig Of The Dump

★★★★

Kubrick

LEWIS RECORDINGS. CD/DL/LP

Capacious Geordie battle rapper reinvents himself on 'a movie for the blind'.

"Observation is a dying art," Stanley Kubrick once noted. The complicated late American movie auteur would have struggled to level the same charge at Stig Of The Dump, whose second album finds the self-styled Homeless Microphonist shedding his boozy stage persona for more incisive cerebral constructs. And while the first half of *Kubrick* is a familiar reassertion of chest-beating bragging rights over satisfying spacey boom-bap beats, Mr Thing's looped vocal chants on All Is Blind signify a shift into disarmingly honest rap balladry and clear-eyed misanthropy that reaches its unforgiving apotheosis across the heavy strings of Broken. Given a final sonic spit-and-polish from seasoned UK producer Jehst, SOTD's dedication to detail is unstinting on a meticulous mini-epic full of self-reflection.

Andy Cowan

SLIME
COMPANY

Slime

★★★★

Company

WEIRD WORLD. CD/DL/LP

Rising Geordie electronica star impresses on his confident debut.

Despite the appellation, there's nothing repulsive about Will Archer's music – an air of unhurried elegance swirls through it. Joining the dots between grown-up 21st century R&B, blunted beats and introspective electronica, imagine James Blake with a dash of D'Angelo, chillwave maven Washed Out and FlyLo's LA beat scenesters. The stoned synth blues of Thuribles, accompanied by freight train harmonica honks, sets the bar high. Slime then raises it on several occasions. Striding Edge is as windswept as its subject, cloaked in a fog of sax and maudlin guitar. The Dilla-esque Patricia's Stories shows another side to Slime, Jeremiah Jae's rugged rhyme melding with brushed drums and piano daubs while stoned funker The Way Of Asprilla – surely a reference to Newcastle United's troublemaking Colombian winger Faustino – suggests Archer has a playful streak too. This is restrained music-making; a slow-release capsule of languid grooves, haunting vocals and crafted songwriting.

Stephen Worthy

Eric Biddines (left) and Paul White: Golden Rules, OK?

Method Man

★★★

The Meth Lab

TOMMY BOY. CD/DL/LP

First of two new sets from Wu-Tang Clan's loquacious breakout solo artist.

A hefty 19-track *amuse-bouche* to whet appetites for his long-awaited comeback *Crystal Meth*, *The Meth Lab* finds Wu-Tang's breakout star rediscovering the animated gruff charisma that made 1994's debut *Tical* such a keeper (but best ignore its shoddy sequel and prequel). Mining iconography from that other meth-themed pop culture trope Breaking Bad alongside a slew of upcoming Staten Island artists (most prominently Streetlife and Hanz On), the wonderfully direct title track, dusty synth headnodder Bang Zoom, spookily tinkling Uncle Murda hook-up Worldwide and Gravediggaz-esque horrorcore fest Symphony roll easy on the beat, yet brim with understated menace. While other Clansmen excel at building intricate metaphors and vivid storytelling, Method Man is all about swaggering confidence and masterful flows. He's still got it.

Andy Cowan

Golden Rules

★★★★

Golden Ticket

LEX RECORDINGS. CD/DL/LP

Hotlanta funk and sublime melancholy from Transatlantic hip hop duo.

GOLDEN TICKET

The opening track from this first collaboration between Floridian underground-rap stalwart Eric Biddines and producer Paul White, Auntie Pearl's House is a lazily funky sing-song confection pitched perfectly between OutKast and Goodie Mob – a doubly impressive feat considering White hails not from the Dirty South, but south London. But as much fun as the eerily ersatz Hotlanta grooves are (and Holy Macaroni is seamy body music of the highest order), *Golden Ticket* is a diverse treat: Don't Be finds Biddines laying down wisdoms over bright Nile Rodgers funk, Play Some Luther locates a sultry post-midnight boudoir vibe, while closing duo Life's Power and The Golden Ticket are, by turns, darkly meditative and powerfully psychedelic pop. Meanwhile, Never Die (with a wonderfully behind-the-beat verse from Yasiin Bey, aka Mos Def) is a melancholic, summery gem.

Stevie Chick

ELECTRONICA

BY STEPHEN WORTHY

LHF

★★★★

For The Thrown

KEYSOUND RECORDINGS. CD/DL/LP

Multi-faced global collective's travels through the UK dance underground.

LONDON IS LHF's home city but its cast members are sprinkled across the globe, dipping in and out of projects – Wu-Tang Clan style. Although it is released under the LHF banner, *For The Thrown* is the work of founder member Amen Ra. Emotional, sensual and packed with melody, its source material is UK rave and the many tributaries of the British underground dance scene. With forays into urban soul, UK garage, dubstep, jungle, grime and even deep house, it's a compelling companion piece to Jamie xx's recent opus, which stitched together a patchwork quilt of dance music history. With the exception of Wet Harmonic – a high-stepping bass track harder than diamond and dirtier than coal – a soft, ambient fuzziness envelops the album. On Natural Boost, plucked strings and Sino-grime collides with a slo-mo garage rhythm and 8-bit video game synths to produce something indisputably euphoric.

ALSO RELEASED

Seb Wildblood

★★★

Foreign Parts

SW. CD/DL/LP

James Tittensor, aka Seb Wildblood, runs Church, a south London-based club and record label whose success is indicative of the shifting sands under the capital's clubland as the east London heartland becomes ever more overcrowded. Gooey house, mid-'80s synth funk and plaintive mood pieces are the keystones of Wildblood's debut; it's unhurried, undemanding and charmingly accessible.

Kelpe

★★★★

The Curved Line

DRUT RECORDINGS. CD/DL/LP

Kel McKeown's four previous albums lived on electronica's periphery. Yet their ambient beatscapes and wonky alt-hip hop instrumentals predicated on loop and drone now look like the missing link between Boards Of Canada and Flying Lotus. On *The Curved Line*, McKeown adopts a sophisticated take on 4/4 grooves; with Calumet's stuttering organic rhythms offering a confident and captivating example.

Gonno

★★★★

Remember The Life Is Beautiful

ENDLESS FLIGHT. CD/DL/LP

At the heart of this gloriously sensual record lies a man as adept at tackling woozy, sun-dappled ambience as he is melodic but saturnine techno. Japanese producer Sunao Gonno's use of analogue gear lends this album a classic feel. Complex and nuanced highlights: the fidgety, beatless solar throb of Already Almost and Stop's mind-expanding, lights out, acid bounce.

Heathered Pearls

★★★

Body Complex

GHOSTLY INTERNATIONAL. CD/DL/LP

Brooklyn-based Jakub Alexander's 2012 debut *Loyal* eschewed the word 'ambient' in favour of 'low level', to avoid supposed negative connotations. *Body Complex* takes a more expansive approach. The techno seedlings that before poked through the soil sporadically now burst into full bloom, characterised by the energy flash created by Interior Architecture Software's warm, jacking groove. *SW*

Sock it to 'em!: the Hooton Tennis Club put best foot forward.

Steve Gullick

Hooton Tennis Club

★★★★

Highest Point In Cliff Town

HEAVENLY. CD/DL/LP

A witty, uplifting and summery odd-pop debut.

Few have ever truly pinpointed exactly why Merseyside periodically produces pop of a particularly wonky and often brilliant bent. From Ellesmere Port/Chester, Hooton Tennis Club play with joyous melodic abandon, offering a pop oddness that is thoroughly charming. Sardonic but never cynical and always sun-drenched, Up In The Air recalls Teenage Fanclub, Kathleen Sat On The Arm Of Her Favourite Chair rattles with fringe-swinging '80s indie energy, and Jasper displays the same lo-fi arty smarts as Pavement or Guided By Voices. Lyrically, the quartet deal in twisted vignettes with playful titles such as …And Then Camilla Drew Fourteen Dots On Her Knee, or, Something Much Quicker Than Anyone But Jennifer Could Ever Imagine. Hooton Tennis Club are utterly northern English then, but devoid of dourness or dumb simian swagger. Few recent debuts have felt quite so enjoyable.

Ben Myers

The Fratellis

★★★

Eyes Wide, Tongue Tied

COOKING VINYL. CD/DL/LP

'People's choice' trio back with album number four.

For all their optimistic, band-as-gang nomenclature, the Glaswegian three-piece named for the criminal mob in The Goonies fractured, weary of each other, in 2009. Frontman Jon Fratelli briefly co-piloted baroque pop outfit Codeine Velvet Club then flew solo on 2011's punky gear-shift *Psycho Jukebox*, but now he's back with the devils he knows, fellow 'Tellis Barry and Mince. While the boisterousness that made 2006 single Chelsea Dagger so welcome on the terraces of Stamford Bridge is successfully repurposed on Baby Don't You Lie To Me! and Too Much Wine, and Thief motors like Lady Madonna on Stevie's Higher Ground, other fruits of this reunion with producer Tony Hoffer – see the mellotron-mangled Rosanna – soon sour. Amid the more throwaway lyrics and gleeful, not always wholly effectual experiments with palette, Slow, a lucid and classy torch song *à la* U2's One, stands out.

James McNair

Chelsea Wolfe

★★★★

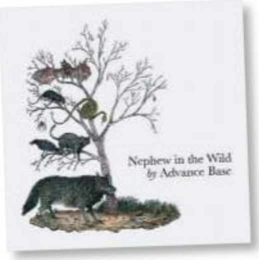
Abyss

SARGENT HOUSE. CD/DL/LP

Californian draws inspiration from the umbrous space between sleep and waking.

Channelling her own experience of sleep paralysis into an album of bewitching netherworld torch songs, Chelsea Wolfe's fifth full-lengther comes aptly named. A first attempt to explicitly soundtrack her condition's "hazy afterlife", *Abyss* is a work of disorientating musical and emotional extremes. Flexing serious sonic muscle with the electro-industrial battery of Carrion Flowers and Iron Moon's Swans-like ferocity, the doom-hued heft is later pared back to reveal a more vulnerable side to this left-field songstress. Cloaked in shadows and fuzz-smothered strings, Maw and Grey Days are candlelit gothic lullabies, Crazy Love a sad-eyed acoustic lament and The Abyss an eerie mix of skeleton keys and ghost-dream ambience. With heart-wrung fragility proving every bit as powerful as punishing intensity, *Abyss* is a darkly compelling *tour de force*.

Andrew Carden



Advance Base

★★★★

Nephew In The Wild

TOMLAB. CD/DL/LP

Owen Ashworth's latest post-Casiotone For The Painfully Alone outreach project.

Owen Ashworth's Christmas songs are for life, not just for Christmas, which is just as well, because there are two of them among the 10 precision-tooled vignettes of Midwestern angst here. The music is a limpid swirl of electric pianos, autoharps and omnichords, periodically stirred up by the clank of a trusty drum machine. The melodies have the divinely-inspired simplicity of Ashworth's outsider gospel role-model Washington Phillips, and the lyrics have the same keen eye for a telling detail as latterday Sun Kil Moon – to whose *Benji* Ashworth made a stellar cameo contribution – only corralled within the disciplined framework of conventional song, rather than roving free through the singer's own twisted subconscious. By opening out his vocals slightly from the gruff mutter of yore, Ashworth has extended his music's emotional range to that of a battery-powered Kris Kristofferson.

Ben Thompson

Gurrumul

★★★★

The Gospel Album

SKINNYFISH. CD/DL/LP

Aching voice, devotional music, everyone cries. Even the mountains.

It may seem strange for an Aborigine to be singing the songs of colonial missionaries who did so much to suppress their 'savage' culture, but then Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu is no ordinary singer. Blind from birth, acutely shy yet blessed with a voice that could make a mountain weep, he grew up listening to the spiritual music of both his Gumatj clan from remote north-eastern Elcho Island and the local Methodist church. Although these songs are rooted in that church, he mostly sings in his native dialect, lending them an otherworldly quality beyond a haunting voice that hits you in the chest and transcends any need for translation. Cradled by the most skeletal folk accompaniment, even something as familiar as Amazing Grace will reduce those feeling a little fragile to puddles on the floor. If there is a God, then he is speaking through Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu.

Andy Fyfe

Sonny Vincent And Rocket From The Crypt

★★★★

Vintage Piss

SWAMI. CD/DL/LP

Thirty-two minutes of max-rockin' punk heaven.

RFTC's 2013 recharge has unleashed this sleeping monster: a dream-team tag-match between John Reis's SoCal garage-rock messiahs, and NYC *Ur*-punk mover/sometime Moe Tucker sidekick Vincent, which somehow got shelved post-sessions in '03. The reasons for its sidelining – the relevant Drag Racist studio shut down before mixing could be completed, then both RFTC and Reis's label Swami went on sabbatical – make rational sense, but on any other level, it seems utterly insane: *Vintage Piss* is an absolute belter of a record. Crypt step up not in their latter years' Mariachi-clad, brass-bustin' sophistication, rather with all the high-velocity, Reis-nicknamed-Speedo fury of its early-'90s *Circa Now* era. Long since marginalised in Holland, Sonny V caps those on-11 pile- drivers, with an incandescent vocal on 80 blasting seconds of Pieces, and riffing throughout like James Williamson's extra-uptight stepbrother. In short: Stoogean raw-power worshippers will freak for this.

Andrew Perry

Cécile McLorin Salvant

★★★

For One To Love

MACK AVENUE. CD/DL/LP

Rising jazz chanteuse continues to impress.

Born in Miami to a French mother and Haitian father, this 25-year-old moved to France in 2007 to study law and classical music but ended up being drawn to jazz and blues. In 2010 she became the youngest ever winner of the Thelonious Monk award – she was just 20 at the time and a complete unknown – and since then has reached an international audience with her 2013 Grammy-nominated album, *WomanChild*. This third long player, which finds her backed by a trio led by pianist Aaron Diehl, explores the vicissitudes of love, weaving disparate songs (both originals and jazz standards) together into a song cycle with a storytelling narrative. Her pitch-perfect voice, with its winsome tone and clear diction, is supremely pliable, supremely brightest on Burt Bacharach and Hal David's Wives And Lovers and an epic deconstruction of Leonard Bernstein's song from West Side Story, Something's Coming.

Charles Waring

Zachary Cale

★★★

Duskland

NO QUARTER. CD/DL/LP

Atlanta singer-songwriter with a Chris Isaaky slickback cool, heat-haze shimmer on his guitar and songs filled with rustic, caught-between-light-and-dark country metaphors. Easy to guess which way he'd go: Cale is a church pastor. *JB*

Eleventh Dream Day

★★★★

Works For Tomorrow

THRILL JOCKEY. CD/DL/LP

Formidable Chicagoans add extra guitarist for their 13th LP, furthering their Sonic Youth/Television post-punk quests. Drummer Janet Bean sings a great cover of Judy Henske/Jerry Yester's Snowblind. *JB*

Seamus Fogarty

★★★★

Ducks & Drakes

LOST MAP. DL/LP

Lambent forays into rural County Mayo, where dentist drills, TV audio clips and electronic fizz punctuate Fogarty's lovely folk reveries in plucked strings and bright sax on inscrutable 23-minute EP. Richard Dawson fans, ahoy. *JB*

Kagoule

★★★★

Urth

EARACHE. CD/DL/LP

Superior grunge-schooled rock from a young Nottingham trio. Cai Burns' taut guitar chisels post-rock shapes, threaded through with voluble, Built To Spill-reminiscent narratives on this accomplished debut. *JB*

Loom

★★★

Loom

RAFT. DL/LP

Boldly cribbing Nirvana's meld of maximum impact melodies and dark, glowering moods, Tarik Badwan (brother of The Horror's Faris) sounds like Pete Murphy doing Come As You Are at a punk rock karaoke – which can only be good. *JB*

Mark Morriss

★★★

The Taste Of Mark Morriss

ACID JAZZ. CD/DL/LP

Opening a covers LP with Jess Conrad's grisly This Pullover is a low, but ex-Bluetone rallies on clarinet-gilded Souvenir (OMD). A piano take on Sisters Of Mercy's Lucretia keeps the original's creepy/camp ratio. *CP*

The Mutants

★★★

Tokyo Nights

KILLER TRACKS. CD/DL

Former Ant person Chris Constantinou corrals Rat Scabies plus Tokyo's garage rock elite for rockabilly mania. Mojo Burning (with Kannana Speed Cats) rips, while Broken Bells (with DeeDeeFever) is oddly moving. *PG*

Night Beds

★★★

Ivywild

DEAD OCEANS. CD/DL/LP

After his debut's dreamy pastoralism Winston Yellen gives his heartsore songs a modern R&B production. The glitchy electronics hard-shield his soulful voice, but on tracks like Corner the digital pulse yields more human warmth. *JB*

Red River Dialect

★★★★

Tender Gold & Gentle Blue

HINTERGROUND. CD/DL/LP

Agreeably shambolic Hiss Golden Messenger-admired Falmouth folk collective led by David Morris, whose reedy vibrato chokes back sobs on evocative songs of Cornish coastal contemplation. *JB*

Reuben James Richards

★★★

About Time

JIGSAW. CD/DL

Known for '90s cut Hold On My Heart, Richards' Otis-like phrasing works well on faster cuts like A.S.A.P. and ballads (Your Broken Promises). But arrangements and lyrics lean towards the predictable. *GB*

Small Feet

★★★★

From Far Enough Away Everything Sounds Like The Ocean

BARSUK. CD/DL/LP

Quality Swedish folk pop trio led by Simon Stålhamre whose cracked tenor is a vessel for unsettling emotional truths. *JB*

Frank Turner

★★★

Positive Songs For Negative People

XTRA MILE. CD/DL/LP

A folk-punk polemicist of undeniable intensity, what Turner lacks in lyrical bravura (still favouring rather mawkish first-person directness) he makes up for with arena-sized melodic hooks on sixth LP. *JB*

Various

★★★★

Late Night Tales: Nils Frahm

LATE NIGHT TALES. CD/DL/LP

You expect a pillowy mix of classical and electronic worlds but Frahm also adds fuzzy cowboy songs, experimental jazz, dub techno and tribal field recordings. Even his girlfriend's cat appears. *SW*

Various

★★★

Total 15: Kompakt

KOMPAKT. CD/DL/LP

Esteemed Cologne unit corrals a trans-global selection of the dancefloor's most revered. The smoky, muted oddball techno of Runaway From The Sun, by Chilean/German artist Matias Aguayo, looms particularly large over his peers. *SW*

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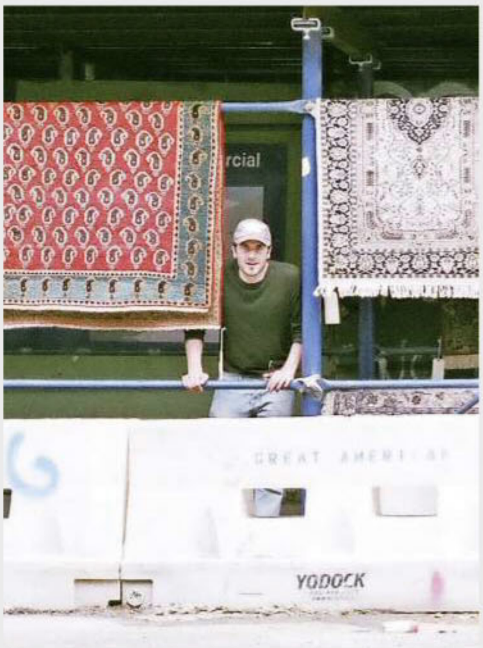

Nicolas Jaar

Pomegranates

Sergei Parajanov's 1969 film The Colour Of Pomegranates tells the story of 18th century Armenian poet Sayat Nova through a series of abstract vignettes. New York composer Nicolas Jaar watched the film in 2015 and was "dumbfounded" by the aesthetic similarity between Parajanov's tableaux and his own music experiments. "The film gave me a structure to follow and themes to stick to," he says. "It gave clarity to this music that was made mostly out of and through chaos." For two days Jaar locked himself away to fit his sounds to the celluloid; the result is a poignant and occasionally unsettling collage of *musique concrète*, fractured beats and industrial ambience. Released for free via Twitter.

Low

No Comprende

The foreboding new single from the slow-burn Minnesota trio is reverb-heavy, driven by a smouldering groove and eerie vocal harmonies. New LP *Ones And Sixes* is due in Sept. (YouTube)

Disclosure ft. Gregory Porter

Holding On

UK dance team up with Blue Note jazzer Gregory Porter, layering his vocals over skippy, summery two-step percussion. (SoundCloud)

Recommended Retailers

Here's the exclusive monthly guide to the country's most mouthwatering independent record emporia. Chosen for their knowledge of both current releases and specialist areas, they're guaranteed to provide the personal touch you won't find elsewhere. And they stock MOJO too. All where you see this sign.

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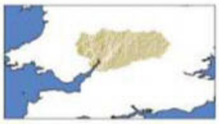

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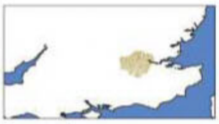

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Tired and emotional

Led Zeppelin imploded in personal tragedy and chemical overload. They weren't built to survive the '80s, but they still went down fighting. By Mark Blake.

Led Zeppelin

Presence

★★★★

In Through The Out Door

★★★

Coda

★★★★

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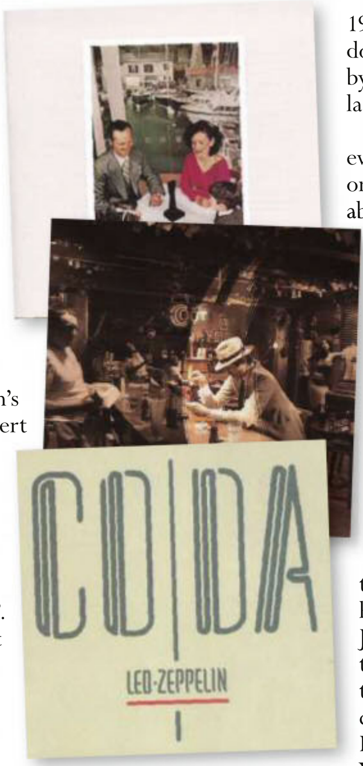


In January 1986, six months after Led Zeppelin's shambolic Live Aid reunion, Jimmy Page, Robert Plant, John Paul Jones and Chic drummer Tony Thompson booked a rehearsal space near Bath, just to see what would happen. The reunion lasted a few days before a disillusioned Plant went home. In a Rolling Stone interview, the singer said that they'd made some new music that sounded "like David Byrne meets Hüsker Dü".

Plant's comment said much about his mindset at the time. After years of leading the way, Led Zeppelin's ex-members were now following others. By 1986, Plant was trying very hard to make solo records that didn't sound like his old group, while Jimmy Page's short-lived ensemble, The Firm, sounded a bit like Zeppelin, but without the joy, drama or, crucially, Robert Plant. Rewind to the late 1970s, though, and it was all very different.

Page's remastering of the Led Zeppelin back catalogue comes to a close with 1976's *Presence*, '79's final studio release, *In Through The Out Door*, and 1982's posthumous outtakes collection, *Coda*. The deluxe editions of all three include rough mixes and, on *Presence* and *Coda*, some previously unreleased tracks. But, ultimately, this is the story of Led Zeppelin when their crown was starting to slip.

Presence is the best of the three. Made quickly and in trying circumstances at Munich's Musicland Studios in winter '75, Plant recorded his vocals with a leg in plaster after a car crash. The singer's anguish (evident on slow blues Tea For One) and Page's over-indulgence – rumour has it he did all the guitar overdubs in a non-stop chemically enhanced fug – helped make this the band's darkest, gnarliest album. The deluxe edition's bonus track, a soft, piano-led instrumental titled Pod, reiterates how dark and gnarly the rest is.

There aren't many choruses here; mostly riffs, juddering and rattling on For Your Life and a revamp of Blind Willie Johnson's 1927 blues, It's Nobody's Fault But Mine. Everything's doomy, intense, and only Hots On For Nowhere, driven by Page's fiendish guitar and Plant's sunny "a-la-la-la-la-la…" semi-chorus, doesn't sound wholly nocturnal.

Presence's centrepiece, Achilles Last Stand, distils everything many adore about Led Zeppelin, and those on the outside can't abide. With Plant rhapsodising about "the mighty arms of Atlas" and guitar overdubs on top of guitar overdubs, it's '70s rock bombast writ large. Even now, its foreboding intro finds the listener assuming a mental crash position, psychologically bracing themselves for the 10:22 minutes to come. *Presence* is brilliant but exhausting, because it doesn't let up. Not once.

A year on, Zeppelin were forced to draw breath, with the sudden death of Plant's young son Karac. On *Presence*, Plant sung about sex, drugs and Greek mythology; now, he said, "the illusion had run its course." You can hear it on the next album.

In Through The Out Door was created in winter '78 at Abba's Polar Studios in Stockholm. But much of the aloofness of *Presence* was gone. Maybe Plant didn't have the stomach for it any more. Most importantly, John Paul Jones co-wrote six of its seven tracks. Over the years, Plant and Jones have tactfully hinted that their bandmates were too busy taking drugs to fully commit to the project. Whatever the reason, this is a Plant/Jones love-in, with Jones's new discovery, a Yamaha GX-1 synthesizer organ, swamping several songs and sounding like the 1980s came early.

Plant finds his rock-god swagger for In The Evening. But the rest almost sounds like a reaction against that stuff. The bouncy samba, Fool In The Rain, and Plant's tribute to his son, the pomp-pop ballad All My Love, suggest Plant and Jones ripping open the curtains and letting some daylight into the vampire's lair. But however much the Yamaha GX-1 sounded like the future in 1979, the intriguingly barmy epic Carouselambra would have sounded better without it now. *In Through The Out Door* is an honest album that makes Zeppelin sound (almost) human. But it hasn't aged well.

With drummer John Bonham's death in September 1980, it was all over. Two years later came *Coda*, a set of outtakes recorded between 1970 and '79. The best of the original bunch is still the frantic rockabilly charge Wearing And Tearing from the Polar Studio sessions. The previously unheard Sugar Mama and St Tristan's Sword, on the deluxe edition, are good ideas as opposed to great songs. What gives this new *Coda* its edge are versions of Four Sticks and Friends recorded in 1972 by Page and Plant in Bombay with local musicians who'd never heard a Led Zeppelin song before. Both versions have an intense, compelling grandeur, and beg the question: what if there'd been more like this?

In fact, these final reissues leave you wondering, What if? several times. What if Bonham had lived? What if that 1986 reunion worked and their new music *did* sound like David Byrne meets Hüsker Dü? We'll never know. But these albums show Zeppelin making astonishing music, even when they were flying too high and falling apart. Right to the end, they led where so many others followed.

KEY TRACKS

- Achilles Last Stand
- For Your Life
- Nobody's Fault But Mine
- Hots On For Nowhere
- Wearing And Tearing
- Friends

BACK STORY: INDIA, 1972

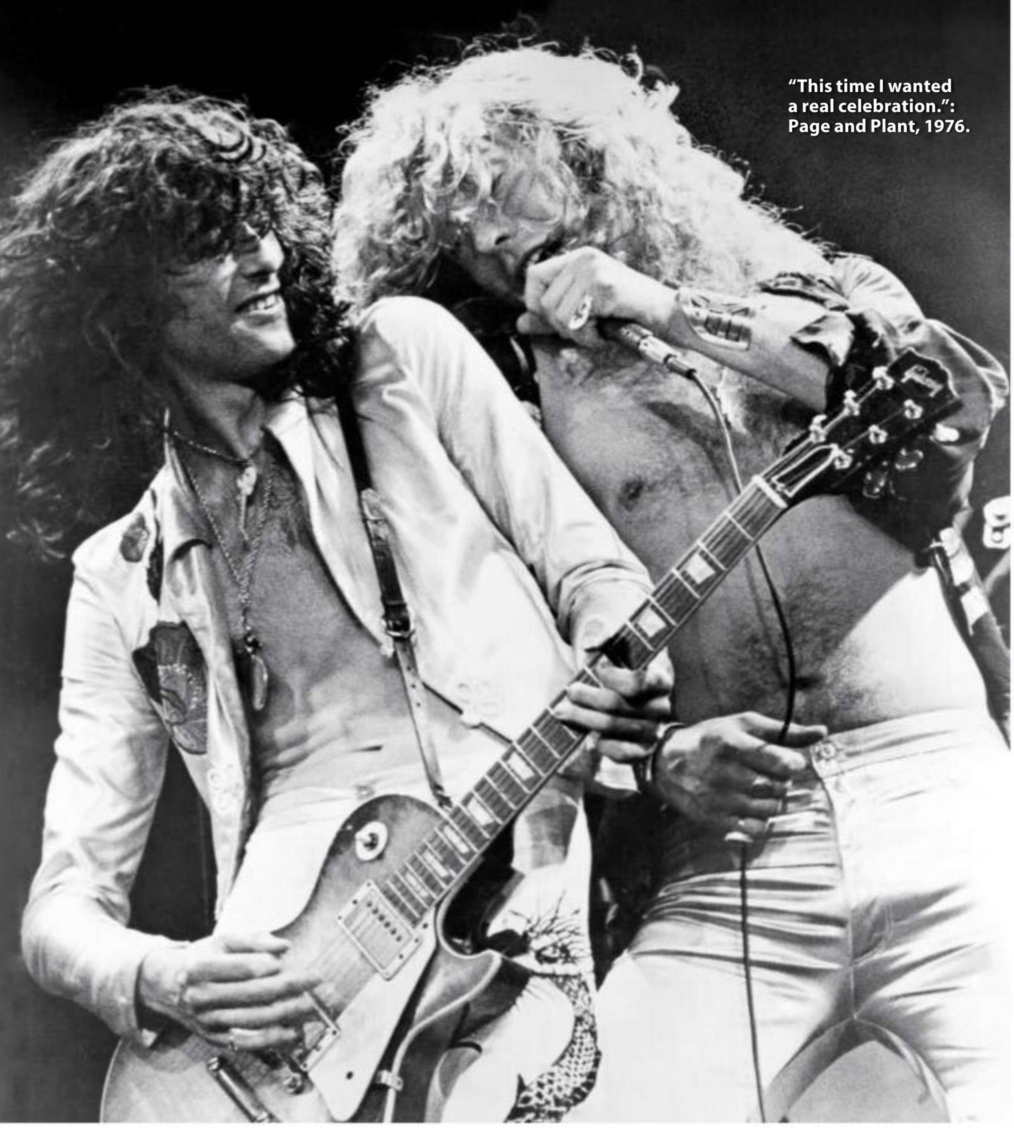
- Fans may have read about the session in ex-Zeppelin tour manager Richard Cole's Stairway To Heaven exposé. But the music rarely surfaced, even on bootleg. Zeppelin were on their way back from an Australian tour in March '72 when they stopped off in Mumbai (then Bombay). They booked a session at EMI's local studio with a group of Indian classical musicians, more used to Bollywood soundtracks. Using an interpreter, the duo and their hired band of percussionists, flautists and sarangi players taped raga-style versions of Friends and Four Sticks (titled Four Hands), available on the deluxe *Coda* for the first time.

Alamy, Atlantic Records

"THIS IS THE STORY OF LED ZEPPELIN WHEN THEIR CROWN WAS BEGINNING TO SLIP."

PAGE TALKS! JIMMY ON RECORDING IN BOMBAY, THE END OF ZEPPELIN, AND FUTURE RELEASES…

Sex, drugs and Greek mythology: Robert Plant and Jimmy Page, exhibiting on-stage presence in the mid-'70s.



“This time I wanted a real celebration.”: Page and Plant, 1976.

Getty Images

“I’m not showing off here.”

Phil Alexander speaks to Jimmy Page.

You’ve said that after *Physical Graffiti* you wanted to make a pure guitar album. Why?

“*Physical Graffiti* needed to be a double album and it was really broad, but I wanted to do something that centred back around the guitar, for sure. We played Earl’s Court [in May 1975] and Robert and I had a plan to have a bit of a travel, then tour, then make another album. Then, unfortunately, there was Robert’s car accident [on Rhodes, August 4, 1975]. He was in a cast. Suddenly, he doesn’t know if he’s going to be able to walk the same way ever again… whether he’ll be able to be so lucid on stage. So he’s worried about that and he just sings his heart out.”

Does the frenetic atmosphere of *Presence* reflect what had happened?

“Without the accident *Presence* would have still been a guitar album, but it wouldn’t have been as intense. There’s a sense of obsession that came into it – certainly from my point of view. I’m not showing off here, but Achilles Last Stand was designed to be a guitar epic. I did all of those overdubs in the space of one day. It goes beyond the term ‘focused’! As far as Robert goes, there is definitely a sense of intensity in his approach and lyrics.”

Pod, the unreleased track on the *Presence* companion volume, is a gentle, theme-like instrumental…

“Yes. John Paul Jones had the opening passages and I worked with him on it. It’s a really interesting piece, it doesn’t fit the album, but it shows that we were always trying different things.”

On the version of Royal Orleans on the companion disc the vocals are rather croaky. Who was Robert trying to be? Dr. John? Beefheart? Louis Armstrong?

“That was a bit of fun. It’s a result of Led Zeppelin’s evening activities, really. Of going down discos and hearing a lot of funk records. People say, ‘Did you listen to funk?’ And I have to say that I think the funk listened to us! We had a lot of fun doing something like that. It’s a funk vocal and one that had been forgotten until this tape turned up.”

Violence erupts at the Oakland show on July 23, 1977, and then a few days later Robert’s son, Karac, passes away. Did you think that the band might end at that point?

“I didn’t think about it but I’m sure that everyone outside the four members of the group did. All the business people certainly did! But we were just so absolutely shocked and sad. Robert was away from home on tour when it happened. What could you do? You just needed to give him time and whatever decision he would have made, we would have gone along with.”

Robert decided to continue, and you began work on *In Through The Out Door* – a very different-sounding album.

“There was a whole different approach. John Paul Jones had got this keyboard and he was writing, and it sounded great. We’d made a guitar album, and the way I saw that album, was that it was shaping up to be a keyboard album and we should let it roll like that.”

It’s a period during which lot of people have written about your substance abuse…

“Were they there? I was there and I’m still here now!”

But on that album there’s a sense that you’re not as present as you used to be…

“Well, as far as I’m concerned I was still producing the band and that’s all there is to it. There’s little more to be said.”

You played Knebworth in August 1980, and then John Bonham passed away the following month. Had he lived, where would you have gone next?

“John and I had discussed what we wanted to do next. He loved the riff stuff because he could really get into that, so that’s where we would have gone. If you listen to Bonzo’s Montreux [on *Coda*] it’s done in the period before *In Through The Out Door* and after *Presence*, but you can hear the stuff John wanted to do.”

***Coda* was the first time you revisited Zeppelin after the end of the band.**

“Yes. Basically, there was an album owing, so it was a contractual rather than a creative thing. ‘Can you put something together?’ they said. Oh… Oh dear. What have we got? It was a difficult time. But this time around I wanted to be a real celebration.”

The versions of Friends and Four Sticks with the Bombay Orchestra are on the new version.

“I wanted to go in there and see how do-able it was to be armed with your guitar, no musical arranger, and work with the musicians directly. I wanted to play music that they’d never heard before, so that’s how it went with Friends. We did a couple of takes with that with Robert singing and I thought, I’m not letting this go, because the percussionists were so good. I thought, We’ll try Four Sticks. I had to play it on the guitar and illustrate it for them. We went through it, and when it came to recording it I thought I didn’t want to play it with the acoustic guitar so we did it like that. It was such an exhilarating experience… an experiment.”

The *Coda* companion has a version of When The Levee Breaks that’s completely different.

“Yes. It’s the original version that was done in a studio [at Olympic 2] and which we then reworked at Headley. In a way it goes to show the mindset of the band, of how we developed ideas and went further every time. That was the point.”

The instrumental, St Tristan’s Sword, is another unreleased track…

“St Tristan’s Sword is the sort of thing that we’d do when we were playing live, not that that track came out from a live thing. But we’d be doing stuff like that, veering off into something and then come back [into the main part of the song]. I’d had the riff and the changes to that and I thought, Let’s just try it. There are two takes of it and that’s it, then we moved on to something else. But it’s got a little charm of its own. On this version of *Coda*, it works. It might not have ever come out otherwise. A lot of this stuff wouldn’t have come out if it wasn’t for this version of *Coda*.”

Sugar Mama hasn’t been issued before…

“It’s short and it’s sweet and it’s being played on the radio which is great. Sugar Mama is off the first album sessions and at the time I don’t even think I even mixed it. It got mixed around the time of [the original version of] *Coda* and it didn’t even make that! At the time [of the first album], I thought, It’s OK, but it’s too lightweight. Plus I didn’t want anything that might be short and sweet and sound remotely like a single. But under the circumstances now, it’s cool. I guess because of the research that went on, digging away at the archives and digging away into the cellar, I was able to picture all of this. There’s two extra discs of *Coda* now and it’s cool.”

This reissue programme has taken over two years. Are there any more Led Zeppelin projects you’re working on?

“Well, there’s a lot been done (*enigmatic smile*). It’s always nice to have an agreement between the members of the band, and everybody was actually very happy about this, so it’s done now.”

Leatherface

★★★★

Razor Blades And Aspirin: 1990-1993

FIRE. CD/LP

Sunderland volume dealers' halcyon era in a 3-disc box.

LEATHERFACE
RAZOR BLADES AND ASPIRIN

The closure of Sunderland's last shipyard in 1988 coincided pointedly with the birth of Leatherface – nicknamed 'The Boat' and as potent an articulation of workingman's angst as UK punk ever mustered. After a scrappy 1989 debut, the quartet's melodious twin-guitar fracas beefed up for 1990's *Fill Your Boots* on Fire's Roughneck imprint, wherein Dickie Hammond's reverberant spiralling leads suggested a steady diet of Hüsker Dü and DC hardcore, while debris-voiced Frankie Stubbs railed against life's absurdities like a laryngitic crow. Critical mass arrived with 1991's mighty *Mush*, Stubbs' Mackem-accented poetry seething through bruised-heart anthems Not Superstitious and Dead Industrial Atmosphere ("The air in here smells like religion and Vaux's beer"), though 1993's *Minx* saw the formula dipping slightly into routine, and Leatherface subsequently split. With all three Roughneck albums plus B-sides (including an enraged take on Tracy Chapman's Talkin' 'Bout A Revolution), this is a bonny tribute to an underrated band.

Keith Cameron

Amara Touré

★★★

1973-1980

ANALOG AFRICA. CD/DL/LP

Enigmatic Guinean's long-lost Latinesque treasures.

Despite his long and successful career, Guinean singer and percussionist Amara Touré recorded very little under his own name. Known for his mastery of Afro-Cuban vocal styles, which saw him lead the influential Star Band de Dakar for over a decade, the three singles and one mini-album he recorded are rightly prized, yet nearly impossible to find, until now. The singles were recorded in Cameroon in 1973, when Touré was fronting the prestigious Black And White band; Lamento Cubano and Cuando Llegaré are most obviously influenced by Cuban *son*, though Fatou and N'Nijo are appealing hybrids sung in local dialect. The eponymous album was cut in Gabon in 1980 with Orchestre Massako, whose slow extended jams continue the Afro-Cuban fixation, though the polyrhythms and extended guitar solos are distinctly African. Baobab fans will love this, though the Massako tracks have audible distortion.

David Katz

Illinois Jacquet – Leo Parker

★★★★

Toronto 1947

UPTOWN. CD

The tenor sax maniac and the Mad Lad together live.

Cab Calloway and Count Basie veteran Illinois Jacquet – legendary for his tenor sax solo in Lionel Hampton's Flying Home – could honk wilder than a drunk goose. Known as 'The Mad Lad', baritone saxman Leo Parker was the master of the low blow. This recording of pros functions as a Rosetta Stone of 20th century American music, mixing swing, bebop, early rhythm & blues and intimations of the future called rock'n'roll – blasting genre labels to smithereens. For example, Jacquet and Parker cover standard Body And Soul by opening it as a poignant ballad, struttin' up to swing tempo and then bringing it down again, toying with the listener (and dancers in the audience, no doubt). Jacquet leads here and Parker shadows, the latter ending it with one bluesy, horny rumble. Body and soul indeed.

Michael Simmons

Bert Jansch

★★★★★

Live At The 12 Bar

EARTH. LP/DL

Rare 20-year-old solo CD reissued on vinyl and hi-fidelity download.

Recorded in 1995 – the year Jansch departed the reformed Pentangle and released one of his finest albums in years, *When The Circus Comes To Town* – this was a limited edition for sale at shows. This particular show couldn't have been more intimate: the tiny 12 Bar on Denmark Street, London, a folk venue as idiosyncratic, modest and out-of-time as Jansch and his music. An excellent 16-song set (two instrumentals), it opens with dreamy, evocative, then-new Summer Heat and includes, among others, Celtic folk (Curragh Of Kildare), a brooding, British take on an American murder ballad (Lily Of The West), filigree folk and blues – and his signature, the exquisite Blackwaterside. There's very little talking and the music is powerful and gentle, thoughtful and utterly riveting. Having lost Jansch to cancer and now the old 12 Bar to developers makes this high-quality reissue particularly poignant.

Sylvie Simmons

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SOUL JAZZ. CD/DL/LP

The best party you've yet to have.

Disco 2 positively flaunts the quality and exuberance around the margins of the multi-million pound disco industry in the late '70s. Compiled by 'Disco' Patrick Lejeune, this is another splendid hi-gloss breeze through 19 tracks you've never heard before. Producers such as Dunn Pearson Jr and Tommy Stewart could have easily been as big as Nile Rodgers or Arif Mardin had the world spun a little differently. All the tracks sound familiar as they often ape better-known examples of the genre. For example, High Frequency's Summertime marries the synths of Cerrone's Supernature with an accurate emulation of Rodgers' scything rhythm guitar, yet it still manages to sound fresh. Timmy Thomas brings more of his deep-in-the-everglades density to Africano. Five minutes into Strut On (Strut Your Stuff) by Otis Brown's Grade A (in its full 13-minute 1980 12-inch glory) is like hearing a missing link between The Salsoul Orchestra and the Gang Of Four. Sublime.

Daryl Easlea

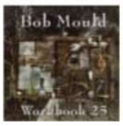
Bob Mould

★★★★

Workbook 25

EDSEL. CD

Belated UK release for 1989 debut's 2-CD silver jubilee.



Following Hüsker Dü's messy demise, the Minneapolis power trio's singer-guitarist did the going-to-the-country-to-get-his-head-together thing. Typically for Bob Mould, this meant isolation on a bleak Minnesota farm and losing his mind somewhat, in exchange for the inner vision to reinvent his hallmark high-velocity assault as pastoral catharsis – new songwriting schemes that would bedrock his future. The predominance of cello, acoustic guitars and folk chord progressions on ageless *Workbook* stand-outs Wishing Well and Brasilia Crossed With Trenton shocked his former band's hidebound devotees, but Mould won the approval of hero Pete Townshend and inspired a new generation of questing voices. Ryan Adams writes a sleevenote for this beautifully presented edition, which adds a complete 1989 concert recording that electrifies the album's rustic mood and anticipates 1990's follow-up (also reissued) *Black Sheets Of Rain*, an over-produced grind that nonetheless led to Mould's glorious fully amped '90s vindication with Sugar.

Keith Cameron

Front Line
REGGAE DISCOMIXES
Front Line
24 KILLER EXTENDED MIXES

Various

★★★★

Front Line Presents Reggae Discomixes

SPECTRUM. CD/DL

The cream of Virgin's reggae crop, extended-play style

During the late 1970s, Virgin Records was home to a number of high-calibre reggae acts. Early signings included U Roy, Mighty Diamonds and The Gladiators, though a link with Keith Hudson proved short lived. By the time the Front Line subsidiary was launched in 1978, reggae singles were overripe for the extended-play format (curiously known as the 'Disco Mix'), and this riveting double-CD compilation shows just how well the presentation was suited to deep roots, since an ordinary vocal could segue straight into a mind-bending dub or the verbal dexterousness of a toasting DJ counterpart. Of the many highlights, U Brown's River John Mountain is a rousing cut of Linval Thompson's Can't Stop Natty Dread, Sly Dunbar offers playful rhythmic powerhouses on Dope Addict and Cocaine Cocaine, and Congo Ashanti Roy jostles with a bluegrass violin on Weeping And Wailing.

David Katz

Wearside story: Leatherface get a whiff of the Vaux.

The blues ran his game: Jackson C. Frank with The Grosvenor Singers, 1962; (right) with Elvis Presley, who wrote to him in hospital, at Graceland, 1957; (right below) in 1998, a year before his death.

His blackened rainbow

The entire known output of the ill-fated American folk singer, with 24 never-before-released songs. By Andrew Male.

Jackson C. Frank

★★★★★

The Complete Recordings

BA DA BING. CD/LP+BOOK

WHEN JIM Abbott first met Jackson C. Frank in Queens in 1993, the 50-year-old singer was in a bad way. Overweight, in pain, living in sheltered accommodation, Frank had recently emerged from the labyrinth of New York's mental health system, coshed with Thorazine after being picked up on the Manhattan streets, searching for the offices of his old friend, Paul Simon. Simon, who'd produced Frank's sole album, *Jackson C. Frank*, in London in 1965, now owned the singer's publishing rights, and Frank wanted them back.

A Woodstock-based folk aficionado, Abbott first became aware of Frank's name in 1983 after finding a water-damaged copy Al Stewart's *Year Of The Cat*, signed "Regards to Jackson. The Blues Run the Game. Al". "Who is Jackson?" wondered Abbott. "What does 'the blues run the game' mean?" He was about to find out. Days before moving to a new care home in the Catskills, Frank was shot with a pellet gun by a gang of local hoodlums, blinding him in one eye. Abbott helped get Frank back on his feet, and in 1996 facilitated the first CD reissue of his 1965 album. Things began to look up. The blues, however, were still playing with a stacked deck.

Even at first listen, *Jackson C. Frank* possesses a haunting power; a 22-year-old man spinning bewitching riddles underscored by finger-style guitar of eerie Orphic calm. The reissue's liner-notes were the stuff of mythic tragedy, telling of how Frank, severely burned in a 1954 school fire that killed most of his classmates, sailed to England on the Queen Elizabeth in 1965, bankrolled by an $80,000 insurance pay-out, writing songs along the way. So much of *Jackson C. Frank*'s otherness is explained in those twin details, Yellow Walls' pained hospital hallucinations and the defeated wisdom of Blues Run The Game. The 1996 reissue also contained five tracks recorded in Woodstock in May 1975. Ten years separate the sessions, yet they sounded a hundred lifetimes apart.

Frank cut a cavalier swathe through the scruffy hinterlands of London's mid-'60s folk scene. His spectral songs seduced scene habitués such as Paul Simon, Al Stewart, Bert Jansch and John Renbourn. Sandy Denny was his girlfriend. By 1968 hash, acid, luck and money had run out. He moved back to Woodstock and married model Elaine Sedgwick, cousin of Warhol muse Edie. The marriage floundered, and when the couple lost a son to cystic fibrosis, Frank came adrift. Hearing voices, he affected a cape, broadsword and optional nudity, referring to himself as Lochinvar. More and more time was spent at Hudson River Street Hospital, from where he wrote to Sandy Denny. There was no letter, just three words written on the envelope "…the May wind…"

Conjured in a brief window of clarity, the 1975 tracks are heartbreaking, like someone trying to illuminate their ghosts. Marlene, a song of atonement, is addressed to Frank's girlfriend, who died in the school fire. "The fire burned her life out," he sings. "It left me little more/I am a crippled singer/And it evens up the score."

Frank died in 1999. In 2003 Castle Music released a 2-CD collection, *Blues Run The Game*, that unearthed more sessions: a December 1961 set of Leadbelly, Jimmie Rodgers and gospel covers showcases the 18-year-old Frank's tender picking style (necessitated by constant pain in his scarred hands) and a singing voice of remote cabin-in-the-hills sorrow, a prospective 1994 LP, facilitated by Abbott, and a final, chilling set of songs, recorded in Frank's kitchen in 1997, in which he casts himself as a voiceless street spectre "in the darkness [where] his blackened rainbow ran".

No one expected to hear any more, but with the co-operation of Abbott and archivist Geoffrey Weiss, Ba Da Bing have added another 33 tracks including Jackson's earliest surviving recordings from 1957, a frothy handful of 1961 folk covers, a home-recording of a smouldering 1968 John Peel session, and three tracks recorded in Woodstock in 1972, where Frank is "hunted by sunlit stone animals deep in the forests of living". Special editions of this remarkable collection come with Jim Abbott's moving Frank memoir, but even if you just invest in the basic 3-CD version it's unlikely you'll experience a stranger and sadder story this year.

Lizzy Mercier Descloux

★★★

Press Color

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC. CD/DL/LP

Originally on ZE in 1979, the first of six albums from world-travelling, genre-gobbling artist.

A French woman hanging out and writing with Patti Smith and Richard Hell in New York, Lizzy Mercier Descloux released her lean, wanton 23-minute debut in 1979. This re-release is double the length, with 10 added tracks and mixes, but most of the goodness resides in those first eight songs. The greatest is the very first: Fire, ostensibly an Arthur Brown cover, is more like ESG and The Slits mixed together by Patrick Cowley, drunk. There's a full disco complement of cowbells, surround-sound synth swooshes and slap-twanging guitar, and just as you think the torrent might calm, a funky sax soars in. And all with a thick-as-beurre French accent. Other stand-outs include a cover of Mission Impossible, a new take on Fever called Tumor ("Tumor when you 'old me tight"), and final track Morning High – Rimbaud's poem read in parallel French/English by Mercier Descloux and Patti Smith.

Anna Wood

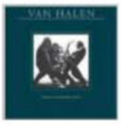
Van Halen

★★★★

Women And Children First

WARNER MUSIC GROUP. CD/DL/LP

Remasters of *Van Ha* , *Fair Warning* and *Diver Down* also available.



Probably the least well-known and most underrated of VH's classic, Dave Lee Roth-era albums, 1980's *Women And Children First* is an off-the-cuff-sounding beast trading the toned pop-metal of *Van Halen I & II* for hi-jinks and messy hooligan riffage. Everybody Wants Some!! and Loss Of Control! still earn their exclamation marks, the former spartan and louche, the latter undertaken at break-neck speed and constantly threatening to derail. Elsewhere, Roth's "Have you seen junior's grades?" on juvenile delinquency jewel And The Cradle Will Rock… still tickles, while unplugged singalong Could This Be Magic? shows breadth, Eddie on bottleneck, Nicolette Larson on backing vocals, and Roth holding court as raindrops patter audibly beyond the recording studio's open doors. A punchy, irreverent and thrillingly throwaway work lasting just 33 minutes, *WACF* sounds like Van Halen's belated, perhaps inadvertent, nod to punk.

James McNair

Pavement

★★★★

The Secret History Vol. 1

DOMINO. CD/DL/LP

Shadow compilation to 1992 debut album *Slanted And Enchanted*.

The title echoes Donna Tartt novel The Secret History. Both works take in wonderful intrigue and a collegiate backdrop, though Pavement, as far as we know, have involved less fatality. All tracks were included on the expanded 2002 *Slanted And Enchanted Luxe & Reduxe* reissue, but they warrant this further assembly. The majority of these B-sides, Peel sessions etc are now compiled on vinyl for the first time, this format coming with sleevenote essays by the band's two singers, Stephen Malkmus and Spiral Stairs, plus additional artwork. The songs remain brilliantly elliptical surveys, often of contemporary America. On Frontwards – represented by a live version – the lyrics seem to carry prescient commentary on our computer-coded existence. With Malkmus's laconic delivery, "natives fussing at the data charts" becomes a neat encapsulation of digital distraction, a modernisation of the "constant flicker" in The Great Gatsby.

Roy Wilkinson

The Royal Jesters

★★★

English Oldies

NUMERO. CD/DL

Another fascinating snapshot of US cultural history.

San Antonio, the Texas city near the Mexican border where the battle of the Alamo was fought, was home to The Royal Jesters, Hispanics enthused by local Spanish radio that also played American soul, R&B and doo wop, or 'English oldies' (meaning English language, not 'of English origin'). Formed in 1958, the RJs started imitating, then creating their own songs in doo wop and other genres, while still leaning heavily on professional sources. Thus, I've Got Soul, written by bassist Joe Perales, is a delightful twist on Laura Nyro's Stoned Soul Picnic, in The 5th Dimension's arrangement, with a dollop of The Impressions. Meanwhile, straighter covers are serviceable, but there are no Miracles happening on the version of Smokey Robinson's What Love Has Joined Together. By the 1970s The Royal Jesters forsook 'English oldies', embraced their Tex-Mex heritage and switched to Tejano. Fascinating portrait of a good local band.

Geoff Brown

Pere Ubu

★★★★

Elitism For The People 1975-1978

FIRE. LP+DL

4-LP box with sonic upgrades for the Cleveland legends' early 45s and first two LPs plus an unreleased '77 live set.

Few bands ever set out with such confidence and vision as Pere Ubu. Their first, self-released singles stand alongside Patti Smith's *Horses* as the axis on which the 1970s revolved. Not that anyone much noticed until 1978, by which time Pere Ubu were touring punk Britain with two extraordinary albums, *The Modern Dance* and *Dub Housing*, under their belt. Forty years later, this stuff still burns. Despite a discernable B-movie vibe, Ubu eschewed all garage rock orthodoxies. Instead, guitars do Magic Band-style tricks, random synths and saxes texturise, the rhythm section provides brick-wall sophistication, while out front David Thomas conducts his carnival for lost souls with a mumbling, hectoring voice that sounds like it's birthing the entire David Lynch aesthetic. Channelling prog ambition, punk attack and all the daring of Krautrock, Pere Ubu were extraordinary.

Mark Paytress

Various

★★★★

Here Today! The Songs Of Brian Wilson

ACE. CD/DL

Covers of Brian Wilson spanning 1963 to 1994.

This 25-track companion to 2003's *Pet Projects: The Brian Wilson Productions* commends Wilson the composer. Darian Sahanaja, founder of The Wondermints who double as Wilson's backing band, takes Do You Have Any Regrets from Wilson's 1991 unissued *Sweet Insanity* album and reworks it through a *Summer Days (And Summer Nights!!)* prism; it's bounteous, harmony-drenched precision. Kirsty MacColl's 1981 rendering of You Still Believe In Me, the Wilson/Tony Asher co-write from *Pet Sounds*, is palpitating in its sincerity; Bobby Vee's 1966 version of Here Today, arranged by Leon Russell, retains the stirring emotion of the BB original. An exuberant Help Me Rhonda by Bruce And Terry aka soon-to-be BB Bruce Johnston and Terry Melcher from '65, meanwhile, might have been the definitive version had The Beach Boys not recut it for a single.

Lois Wilson

The Jean-Paul Sartre Experience

★★★★

I Like Rain: The Story Of…

FIRE. CD/DL/LP

New Zealand moodists' 1984-94 output in a box.

Flying Nun's first compilation, 1986's *Tuatara*, felt like a line drawn in the sand after the initial Chills-Clean charge. Christchurch's JPSE (as they became known after the Sartre estate intervened) felt like the start of the next wave with 1987's smouldering eponymous debut EP, both downbeat and feverish (early-demos set Masked & Taped, was equally sharp and sad, with bonus tape hiss). But twilight ballad Grey Parade and juvenile ditty I Like Rain aside, their debut album *Love Songs* underwhelmed. 1989's *The Size Of Food* resembled another band; tighter-coiled, twin guitars, oozing ballads such as Shadows. It took another four years before *Bleeding Star*, whose post-shoegaze aura also took cues from their volcanic label peers The Straitjacket Fits. It suited them, but The JPSE imploded months later. Doomed to the shadows of Flying Nun's more famous exponents, this box set should finally rehabilitate the band.

Martin Aston

Dizzy Miss Lizzy: Mercier Descloux (right) and Patti Smith pairing off.

Highways of their life: The Isley Brothers (from left) Chris Jasper, O'Kelly, Ronald, Marvin, Ernie and Rudolph Isley.

Generation game

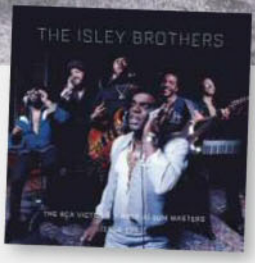
Their career spanned six decades. Not even a 23-CD luxury liner of dynastic soul magnificence can encapsulate it. By Geoff Brown.

The Isley Brothers

★★★★

The RCA Victor And T-Neck Album Masters 1959-1983

SONY. CD/DL



THIS SMALL brick of a box set housing 22 Isley Brothers albums, many of them essential to any soul-funk library, astonishingly does not include something like a dozen tracks that any sane person would suggest were key to the band's story. That is not a complaint, merely a fact to illustrate the broad sweep of their career and the impossibility of licensing so many strands. The sequence here starts at 1959's RCA release *Shout!*, misses out virtually all of the '60s by leaping to *It's Our Thing* (with an early version of It's Your Thing) and *The Brothers: Isley* (The Blacker The Berrie aka Black Berries, an Isley must-have, the horn arrangements a revelation) both out in 1969 on their own T-Neck label after gaining full artistic control, of which more later.

The Isleys story began with four very young brothers – Rudolph, O'Kelly, Ronald and Vernon – singing gospel but stalled when Vernon was killed by a car. Returning as a secular group after a period of grieving, the trio began recording in the '50s, using gospel, rock'n'roll, jazz, doo wop, R&B, soul. Absorbing the influence of a second generation of family towards the end of the '60s, they doubled in size to conquer funk. Later they smooched with the best. In passing they influenced the first batch of '60s British beat boomers as Twist And Shout, Shout, Nobody But Me, Respectable and others became much-covered setlist staples; their backing band featured the young Jimi Hendrix, heard distinctively on guitar; and their lead singer Ron, falsetto flights, soul pleading, rangey screaming and all, eventually enjoyed the widest mainstream acclaim as he was sought out by Rod Stewart, R Kelly, Warren G et al.

And it's Ronald's voice that stretches across the *Shout!* album as the major force: as the trio fuse gospel-jazz (When The Saints Go Marching In), blend blues, jazz, doo wop and rock'n'roll in St Louis Blues, Ron uses an intonation of James Brown on Sy Oliver's Yes, Indeed! (the "deed" of the title phrase to be precise) at the end of which he gets the "shout" phrase that was the keynote of their early hits. And if there was a better rockin' up of a ballad than How Deep Is The Ocean this writer never heard it, while Not One Minute More suggests Ronnie could've rivalled Johnny Mathis as a balladeer. Some start.

The switch into a post-Motown sound is sudden and explosive, as head-turning a transformation as any achieved by a rock band. With the addition of three younger Isleys – Ernie, first on drums, later on expansive post-Hendrix guitar; Marvin (bass), cousin Chris Jasper (keyboards) – their reinterpretations placed white rock and pop songs under new ownership (obviously: Summer Breeze, Hello It's Me; angrily: Neil Young's Ohio, Hendrix's Machine Gun; sweetly: a love of Carole King songs (Brother, Brother, It's Too Late)). Of even greater interest to MOJO's rock fans: *In The Beginning…* an album of tracks recorded in 1964-65, when Hendrix was the Brothers' guitarist, and briefly released in '71. The Hendrix guitar style is already apparent on gospel racer Testify and Move Over And Let Me Dance, and Ronnie's vocal on the latter is a blueprint for the Hendrix singing style to come. Although released after the Motown interlude, these tracks were recorded before the Detroit years. Rarer is the full *Wild In Woodstock*, a 1980 album recorded in Bearsville studios to live arrangements of catalogue songs (crowd noise to be added at a later date. CBS rejected the LP – obviously the group weren't wearing that glorious stage clobber). This version has five tracks never before released, an urgent Say You Will and Ron's lovely vocal on Here We Go Again proving stand-outs. Of two other 'live' albums in the box: '69's double *At Yankee Stadium* featured only one side of the Isleys – Edwin Hawkins Singers, Brooklyn Bridge, Five Stairsteps and others shared the rest – and Ernie on drums. Still in New York but quite a step down in venue size, by the time 1973's *The Isleys Live* was taped at the Bitter End, Ernie had switched in earnest to guitar, and the band were in the vanguard of the self-contained soul-funk acts, but still reeling off exceptional interpretations of Ms King, Stephen Stills, Bob Dylan, and ending the set, an Ohio/Machine Gun medley.

The arc of their T-Neck studio albums, starting at the two '69 releases mentioned earlier, hits its stride from 1973's *3+3* (bonuses include an interview with O'Kelly), with 1975 US Number 1 *The Heat Is On*, to the classics *Harvest For The World* (1976) and *Go For Your Guns* (1977), after which there is a perceptible drift in quality of material, until the disposable *Inside You* (1981) and *The Real Deal* (1982). *Between The Sheets* (1983) points the way for Ronnie to later morph again, into a post-disco lurve man.

So what's missing? Influential 1961-62 Wand recordings (Twist And Shout, Nobody But Me), their 1962-64 United Artists tracks (Surf And Shout, a first version of Who's That Lady), the 1965-68 spell on Tamla (This Old Heart Of Mine, I Guess I'll Always Love You, Behind A Painted Smile et al) and the late-era albums when the Brothers were winding down, gradually reduced to Ronald, Ernie and Marvin (1996's *Mission To Please*) or 2003's *Body Kiss* when only Ronnie, rebranded as Mr Biggs, and Ernie remained. With outtakes, that's another small suitcase to fill (nb: a 1999 Sony Legacy 3CD comp *It's Your Thing: The Story Of…* cherry-picked Isley's entirety).

Alamy

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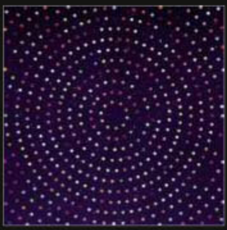

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"Extraordinary, eloquent." MOJO 4/5

Karin Krog

★★★★

Don't Just Sing – An Anthology: 1963-1999

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC. CD/DL/LP

Norway's questing jazz vocalist finally gets the compilation she deserves.

Until now, non-conformist Norwegian jazz vocalist Karin Krog has remained a Scandinavia-only delicacy. A household name in her home country, she also sells out in Sweden. *Don't Just Sing* rights this wrong for the first time. Born in 1937, she began singing live in the mid '50s. Releasing records since 1964, her subsequent path takes in collaborations with musicians as uncompromising as Dexter Gordon and John Surman. Krog's trademark is reconfiguring her sensuous voice with electronics and tape recorders: among her inspirations is the Norwegian experimental composer Arne Nordheim. *Don't Just Sing* – which, despite the years covered, is a unified listen – opens with her playful, aural cut-up take on Gertrude Stein's As A Wife Has A Cow. Her version of Ode To Billie Joe is as striking as might be imagined. Get this. It's an essential tribute to a true one-off.

Kieron Tyler

Totó La Momposina

★★★★

Tambolero

REAL WORLD. CD/DL

Remastered and reimagined: a Colombian classic from '93.

TOTÓ LA MOMPOSINA
TAMBOLERO

Arriving in Britain at the start of the 1990s, the Colombian singer and bandleader carried herself like a superstar of acoustic, percussion-heavy traditional music – though whenever she was asked about the state of music in the Caribbean, she would cheerfully admit nobody wanted to listen to anything but the most modern, mass-produced, soulless pap. The album she recorded here, *La Candela Viva*, her first to even be released in Colombia, was a cornerstone in the revival of interest in old-school cumbia at home; now La Momposina and her producers have gone back to the master tapes to see what they had missed first time around. Listening to the albums back to back, it's clear the producers have a greater understanding this time: the result is a sparkling 'new' set with the sound – the warmth of the drums (tambors) especially – magnificent.

David Hutcheon

McCarthy

★★★★★

I Am A Wallet

OPTIC NERVE. LP

Expanded 1987 masterpiece by leftist Essex enigmas. New sleevenote by Manic Street Preacher Nicky Wire.

By 1987, into PM Margaret Thatcher's third term, the default posture of UK indie music had shrivelled to romantic nostalgia for the '60s. Superficially, McCarthy's folk rock jangle was just another throwback, but such was the subversive genius of this Barking quartet that guitarist Tim Gane's spiralling efflorescence was a pretty front for singer Malcolm Eden's Marxist satires on the truth behind the "rich shareholder's smile". Although some subsequent records suffered from over-production, McCarthy's debut *I Am A Wallet* captured their vision at its purest: 14 brief songs crammed with words, The Procession Of Popular Capitalism and The Way Of The World glimmering like elegant haikus, Eden's dulcet voice sadly foretelling the greedhead future. This new double-LP edition adds 13 tracks – including early singles Red Sleeping Beauty and Frans Hals – and is pressed on comradely red vinyl to inspire permanent revolution.

Keith Cameron

the fantastic four
THE LOST Motown ALBUM

The Fantastic Four

★★★★

The Lost Motown Album

KENT. CD/DL

First issue of 1971 album plus 13 extras from the Detroit vocal group.

Hits with local rival label Ric Tic led to a Motown contract, but after initial success this Motor City quartet were sidelined with their 1971 intended album for the label shelved. Titled *How Sweet He Is*, the 'he' in the title referring to their emotive-voiced lead singer 'Sweet' James Epps, its 12 tracks plus 13 bonuses from the same time frame are issued here. Today, it sounds like classic Hitsville, the songs, penned and produced by William Weatherspoon before he departed for HDH's Invictus/Hot Wax stable, providing the excitable peaks, in particular the high drama dancer Take Him Back If He Makes You Happy and the buoyant Keep On Tryin' ('Til You Find Love). Bonus How Big Is Your Heart, a Johnny Bristol production from 1969, is another essential gem.

Lois Wilson

Wadih Saffieddine

Soapkills: keeping it strictly Beirut.

VINYL PACKAGE OF THE MONTH

Various

Big Box Of Afrosound

VAMPISOUL

These 10 singles collate rare and previously unissued 45s from Antonio Fuentes Estrada's esteemed Disco Fuentes label, spanning 1966 to 1979. Compiled by Pablo Yglesias, aka DJ Bongohead, and housed in a 7-inch cardboard box also containing an excellent booklet vividly illustrated by CS Fossett, it's a thrill seekers' ride through what's been dubbed "the Colombian Motown". It's all floorfilling stuff and wide ranging too, covering salsa, cumbia, boogaloo, porro and tamborera. Such diversity is exemplified by 1975's Fiebre De Lepra (Fever Of Leprosy) by Wganda Kenya, a frenzied Afro-psych-funk smothered in wah wah guitar, screaming organ and vibrant chanting, and 1979's Cumbia De Sal by Cumbias En Moog. Their sole 45, it reworks Los Falcons' classic original as switched-on disco funk driven by Moog synth and high pitched vocals. *Lois Wilson*

ORANGE BLOSSOM

Orange Blossom

★★★

Everything Must Change

ECC 100. LP

On vinyl, the worldly French trio's 2005 breakthrough, full of eastern promise.

Worlds collided on Orange Blossom's debut in 1997. An invigorating fusion of African polyrhythms, Arabic melodies, electronics and righteous dub grooves, the Nantes worldbeat band powered by violinist PJ Chabot and percussionist/programmer Carlos Robles Arenas briefly floundered when singer Jay C upped sticks to form Prajna. *Everything Must Change* marked the dramatic entrance of Leïla Bounous, whose evocative voice cut right through the bright driving beats and spattered horns of Maldito (Cursed) and Habibi (My Darling)'s perfect storm of scything guitars. And even though Cheft El Khof (I've Seen Fear) started like a bloodied renegade from Monkey Farm Frankenstein's secret lab, Orange Blossom capably recast it into a sinuous slice of Middle Eastern disco worthy of Transglobal Underground in their early-'90s prime.

Andy Cowan

Soapkills

★★★★

The Best Of

CRAMMED DISCS. CD/DL/LP

The moody sound of young dreamers growing up in a war zone.

Establishing themselves as a duo in Beirut at the start of the century, Yasmine Hamdan and Zeid Hamdan (no relation) always stood out from Lebanon's rock crowd, their electronic sound a counterpoint to the hardcore guitar bands, their adoption of Arabic song styles a stark contrast to the rejection of the past their peers favoured. With a subtle political undertone (the band's name referred to the gentrification and smothering clean-up of their city after civil war) and a generous helping of melancholy (both the arrangements and Yasmine's voice), Soapkills melded Om Kalsoum to Portishead over the course of three LPs between 2001 and 2005, bringing a greater Middle Eastern emphasis to the music as they developed. The singer has since won greater international acclaim, but she hasn't yet dramatically improved on tracks such as Kasdoura, Souleyma or Cheftak.

David Hutcheon

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Alamy

FILEUNDER

Hear the beards

The Band, Americana forefathers, were authentically ersatz. By Jim Irvin.

One could argue that Americana's ground zero was, of all places, Toronto, where such icons of rootsiness as Joni Mitchell, Neil Young and, of course, The Band plied their trade early on. The Band came together between 1958-64 as a Toronto-based outfit backing itinerant rockabilly Ronnie Hawkins, from Arkansas, who'd found an audience in Canada and hung around. After that gig faded, they lucked into the orbit of Bob Dylan – the great transformer – assisted him in the late '65 amplification of his music and transformed themselves, without any irony, into the tight but loose epitome of downhome American authenticity.

Their 1968-76, eight-album output for Capitol gets the handsome, boxed, vinyl reissue treatment this month. Their music's impact far exceeded its reach. These records sold modestly, but even in Britain everyone from Fairport Convention to The Beatles changed what they were doing after hearing them. And the music continued to exert a powerful influence. Even, indeed, upon this very organ: the 'brown album', the self-titled second LP, soundtracked the long nights when this magazine was being developed in 1993, founding editors Paul Du Noyer and Mark Ellen suggesting designer Andy Cowles make it look like the album sounded – woodsy, hairy, ingenuous and wise.

The evolution from sidemen to game-changers had taken several years, but the disillusion was quicker, cracks showing in the bonhomie and unity as early as their third album. So, one can refine their essence to *Music From Big Pink* ★★★★, the scrappy, enigmatic broadcast from who-knows-where that turned so many heads (back here in its original gatefold sleeve), and *The Band* ★★★★★, the brown one, the source of all their best-known tropes and conceits. After that, The Band struggled slightly to sound like themselves, their originality receding beneath the surge of keen fellow travellers.

The unedifying rainbow-coloured sleeve to 1970's *Stage Fright* ★★★ hinted that attention to detail was slipping. The songs, self-produced with promising engineer Todd Rundgren, were not as thrilling as the previous year's marvels, missing the 'clubhouse' quality of John Simon's productions. The second side is pretty great, though.

Cahoots ★★★ expanded the palette with Allen Toussaint and Van Morrison but felt more tired than vintage. *Moondog Matinee* ★★, a pleasant enough set of rock'n'roll covers seems pointless today, while *Rock Of Ages* ★★★, a double live set with a fudgy mix, retains a cranky appeal. Four years after *Cahoots* – an age back then – few noticed their next set of original material, *Northern Lights-Southern Cross* ★★★★ (the title alluding to their trans-continental pull). It was more focused, and even trod new ground, but tastes were shifting, and by 1977's contract-closing rag bag *Islands* ★★★ there was a whiff of ageing hat. Their work done, The Band tooled up for a last waltz.

"Woodsy, hairy, ingenuous and wise": The Band getting tight but loose.

> "EVERYONE FROM THE FAIRPORTS TO THE BEATLES CHANGED WHAT THEY WERE DOING AFTER HEARING THEM."

Air

★★★

The Virgin Suicides

AIRCHEOLOGY. CD/DL/LP

A deluxe repackage of the French duo's 2000 OST for Sofia Coppola's movie, this mainly brings the same invariably pleasant easy acoustic-electric moods as their debut *Moon Safari*. A second disc features the songs live, and a poster too. *IH*

Roy Ayers

★★★★

Searching For Sunshine 1973-1980

RAVEN. CD

Ever popular smooth groove jazz-soul-funk vibesman's *You Send Me*, *Fever* and *No Stranger To Love* LPs plus eight extras like Running Away, Everybody Loves Sunshine from other LPs of the period on 2-CD value pack. *GB*

The Kitchen Cinq

★★★★

An Anthology 1965-68

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC. CD

First recruits to Lee Hazlewood Industries, here's the Texans' sole album, *Everything But*, plus extras. Spikey, sunburnt, tremble-heavy '60s guitar pop, Hazlewood's production 'supervision' ensures The Kitchen Cinq shine. *PS*

Little Richard

★★★★

Directly From My Heart

CONCORD. CD

Rock'n'roll's basic code written here by Penniman from 1955 to early '60s with a break for God. Tutti Frutti, Lucille, Long Tall Sally, etc plus good lesser-knowns. Nice pics and Billy Vera note; recording info is scant. *GB*

Various

★★★

20 Years Of Being Skint

SKINT. CD

Fatboy Slim's label owned the hip hop/breakbeat/house hybrid 'big beat', then dipped into smart house and techno. This 3-CD set of hits, remixes and new cuts says its latter-day output has more legs. *SW*

Various

★★★★

The Capitol Northern Soul 7s Box

HOODOO. 45s

Fourteen acts – Doris Troy, Billy Preston, etc – on seven 45s, impeccably dance-attuned, but not all vocals wholly convince. *Chess Northern Soul* set also released. The limited edition vinyl boxes cost circa £45. *GB*

Various

★★★

Liverpool Sounds

FANTASTIC VOYAGE. CD/DL

The sounds of Liverpool, ranging from '30s sides by comedian Arthur Askey, then on through the world of Z-Cars, Merseysippi jazz, pre-rock pop and finally to Beatlemania, with Johnny Gentle reminiscing. *FD*

Various

★★★★

Perfect Motion

CTR. CD/DL/LP

Subtitled 'Jon Savage's Secret History Of Second-Wave Psychedelia 1988-93', this is a monkey shuffle back to the acid house/baggy years. After Shack and The High on the guitar side, dancey cuts (DHS, Sabres Of Paradise) prevail. *IH*

BIG BILL BROONZY
THE BLUES
BIG BILL'S BLUES

Big Bill Broonzy

★★★★

The Blues/Big Bill's Blues

SOUL JAM. CD/DL

Two 1958 LPs by immensely influential blues man whose style and folk, blues, gospel reach – Southbound Train, See See Rider, Swing Low… – touched '60s folk boomers, R&B and blues wannabes. *GB*

Cocteau Twins

★★★

Echoes In A Shallow Bay/Tiny Dynamine

4AD. LP+DL

Originally two November 1985 EPs, now one LP, capturing the trio mid-transit betwixt earlier post-punk melodrama and subsequent amniotic mood music. Liz Fraser's lyrics seem mostly butterfly-related. *KC*

DURAN DURAN
RIO

Duran Duran

★★

Rio

PARLOPHONE. CD/DL/LP

A massive seller from 1982 expanded over two discs: within is synthy, teen appeal, haircut pop-rock suitable for dancing, with a vestige of romo, like Japan imagined by Gordon Ramsay. Like its Athena poster sleeve art, a nostalgia purchase. *IH*

John Foxx

★★★★

20th Century: The Noise

METAMATIC. CD/DL

From *Metamatic* to Foxx's late '90s return with Louis Gordon. Standouts are the breezy Miles Away, a re-recorded Hiroshima Mon Amour and the previously unreleased Musique Electron. Another set due next year. *DB*

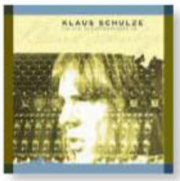
Joi

★★★★

Joi Sound System

REAL WORLD. CD/DL

Three-CD best-of DJ-ing brothers Farook and Haroon Shamsher's hybrid of psyched-up traditional Bengali sounds and London clubland tropes born out of the '90s Asian Underground scene. An often mesmerising set of ambient techno and Asian fusion. *JB*



Klaus Schulze

★★★

La Vie Electronique 16

MIG. CD/DL

Six-hour, 5-CD compendium presents the kosmische Berliner from the early '70s on. Manuel Göttsching guests on a live '81 segment, but disc two's 1977 London gig is best for inner space voyaging. *IH*

SHOULDER TO SHOULDER
SOUTH WALES
STRIKING MINERS CHOIR
TEST DEPT

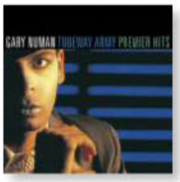
Test Dept

★★★★

Shoulder To Shoulder

PC-PRESS. LP

Red vinyl edition of New Cross scrap-metal symphonists' stirring 1984 album, recorded with the South Wales Striking Miners Choir. Coincides with TD documentary DS30 and a 400-page archive book, Total State Machine. *JB*



Gary Numan/ Tubeway Army

★★★★

Premier Hits

BEGGARS BANQUET. LP

This 21-track double-LP set spanning '78-83 has smashes (Are 'Friends' Electric?; Cars), B-sides (We Are So Fragile) and early 45s (Bombers); all sound like now. Ideal for the vinyl-happy casual Numanoid. *KC*

Tina
TURNER
Private Dancer

Tina Turner

★★★★

Private Dancer

PARLOPHONE. CD/DL

Tina's 1984 massive solo break-out had a modern, big-hitting soundscape – Mark Knopfler's title track, two Hi covers, What's Love Got To Do With It. Extras? Film hit We Don't Need Another Hero! It's Only Love! Bowie live on Tonight! 12-inch mixes! *GB*

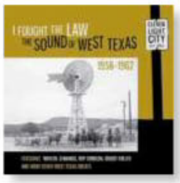
Unwound

★★★★

Empire

THE NUMERO GROUP. DL/LP

Fourth and final volume of Numero's forensic tribute to the Olympia, WA trio, covering their latter-day evolution from post-hardcore ragers into an elegant emo Radiohead, as on Turbulence et al. Unreleased cuts and rarities aplenty. *KC*



Various

★★★

I Fought The Law

ELEVEN LIGHT CITY. CD

Clean-cut mug-shots on the inner sleeve suggest not a parking ticket among them, but a subtle swagger emerges in the echo and sway of The Crickets, Roy Orbison and more's early rock'n'roll recordings from West Texas, 1958-62. *PS*

I LOVE YOU COLE PORTER
THE POP SIDE OF THE MASTER SONGWRITER

Various

★★★★

I Love You, Cole Porter

ÉL. CD

Mainly jazz-based takes on the master songwriter's works, by Everything But The Girl, Julie London, Bill Evans, Cecil Taylor et al. Elegance abounds on Ray Charles and Betty Carter's Ev'ry Time We Say Goodbye. *IH*

JIMMY WEBB
ORIGINAL ALBUM SERIES

Jimmy Webb

★★★★

Original Album Series

RHINO. CD

Storage-friendly set of five albums – everything from 1970's *Words And Music* to *El Mirage* in 1977. A rolling landscape of lyrical invention, as Webb is captured at his sun-blessed best. *PS*

Townes Van Zandt

★★★★

The Late Great…

CHARLY. LP

Tasty white vinyl of Townes's 1972 LP. With his most covered song, Pancho And Lefty, it was his final commercial recording for Poppy; caught between lazy euphoria and ruminations on oblivion and death. *AM*

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COMING NEXT MONTH

Richard Hawley, New Order, Mercury Rev, Iron Maiden, Low, Libertines (pictured), Peaches, Lou Barlow and more.

Getty Images

Changing roles: Ray Brooks, out of season circa 1971. "I started writing songs as a therapy, an escape," he says; (below) Mr Benn paid the bills.

As if by magic

In this month's forgotten high-street outfitters of stylish '70s introspection, an autumn-hued safari-suit threaded with string-laced sadness from a much-loved children's TV star.

Ray Brooks

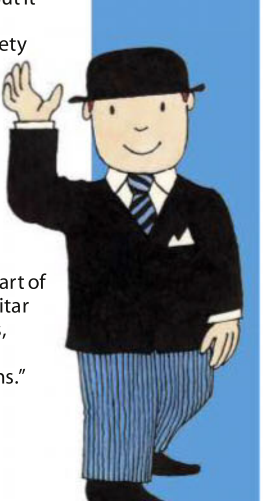
Lend Me Some
Of Your Time

POLYDOR, 1971

He'd played the chillingly cool black-gloved lothario Tolen in Richard Lester's 1965 film adaptation of Ann Jellicoe's wild-minded feminist 1962 play, The Knack And How To Get It, and had been cast opposite 'Battersea Bardot' Carol White in Ken Loach's controversial 1966 TV play, Cathy Come Home. So you believe Ray Brooks when he tells you, "I thought I would roar on after making those two films." But it didn't happen.

Through a combination of naivety – "I thought they would come to me" – and an ever-growing influx of working-class male leads usurping his position, by 1968 Brooks was struggling to support a young family in Brighton, waiting for the phone to ring, and wondering whether he should have another shot at that music career that had fizzled out at the start of the decade. "I'd bought my first guitar for three quid," remembers Brooks, "and learned four chords from an adagio dancer at the Clacton Butlins."

"THE SONGS ARE INTRO-SPECTIVE BECAUSE THERE WERE TIMES WHEN THE PHONE DIDN'T RING."



After starring in a 1960 BBC TV adaptation of Walter Greenwood's The Secret Kingdom, the 21-year-old Brooks was contacted by Freddie Poser of London music publishers Mills Music. After cutting unreleased single Run Around, written by Adam Faith songwriter Johnny Worth, Brooks dyed his hair blond and fronted The John Barry Seven on TV play Girl On A Roof after Faith turned it down.

Two years later, with Brooks starring opposite Sid James in BBC sitcom Taxi!, Worth tried to sign him again, asking 50 per cent commission. Brooks said no. He also turned down Andrew Loog Oldham: "He followed me onto the tube, shouting, 'Make a record for me! I manage The Rolling Stones.' I'd never heard of them [but] I went to his office, just off Bond Street, big American car outside. It was full of girls, with short skirts up to their armpits, Tiffany lamps and carpets with pile a mile high. He's on the phone talking to somebody, glass of whisky in his hand, fag on the go, and I looked at him and he looked at me and I thought, Oh bollocks to this, and walked out. There was a lot of that stuff going on, you know."

By 1969, however, the teen-pop door had closed, along with the movie offers. "We were struggling for money, I had a lot of time doing nothing." As he later wrote in the album's sleevenotes, "I started writing songs as a therapy, an escape."

Following Cathy Come Home, Brooks remained in touch with Carol White's husband, Mike King, of '60s vocal group The King Brothers. A man well connected in the British record industry, King wangled Brooks an album deal. Influenced by the first James Taylor record ("wonderful"), the songs of Jimmy Webb ("beautiful"), and the inevitable melancholy that comes with unemployment and drift in an out-of-season seaside town, the songs Brooks wrote for *Lend Me Some Of Your Time* are extraordinary; introspective minor-key winterscapes written from the perspective of dying gamblers, melancholy fathers, pleading lovers, deadbeat dreamers, bully-boy film directors and doomed Swinging '60s sirens. "The songs are introspective because there were times when the phone didn't ring," says Brooks, "but I was born in Brighton, so they're about out-of-season seaside resorts because of that. Yes, I was a bit melancholy, but all that stuff, 'suitcases in the hall', 'wish you were here', they're all really about love."

Brooks laid down basic guitar and vocal tracks. "Then they dragged me into IBC Studios near Portland Place. The LP was produced by Ray Cameron who'd had a hit with Grandad, and worked with Barry Cryer on the Kenny Everett shows. What did he bring to proceedings? Not much. I remember him telling one of the drummers, 'Make it sound like fish being slapped on a wet counter.' I thought, Oh, bloody hell. When they played me the album with backing tracks and violins and God knows what else, I couldn't even recognise the songs. It was extraordinary."

CREDITS

[redacted] Lend Me Some Of [redacted] Without You / Hush, Hush I'm Dying / [redacted] Me / Oh Carol / [redacted] Sweet Emma / Wish You Were Here / There'll Be A Time / Mr [redacted]ebird / Guttersnipe

[redacted]corded: IBC Studios, 1970

Released: 1971

Personnel: Ray Brooks (guitar, vocals); Mike Morgan, Ken Sweet (gtrs); Les Hurdle (bass); Byron Davis, Dougie Wright (drms)

Produced: Ray Cameron

Arranged: Guy Fletcher, Keith Roberts.

Available: Currently unavailable but do visit www.raybrooksbooks.com for more information.

One song, curdled Mod-pop admonition Oh Carol, was, says Brooks, "about Carol White. But not rudely. It was about having a girlfriend called Carol who wanted to go to London and pop pills. During the '60s everyone was taking drugs. I had two spliffs. What a strange world the '60s was."

The rest of the LP is something else entirely. Brooks's voice, a thing of gentle whispered intimacy coloured with longing and loss, blends perfectly with the keening string and horn arrangements of Guy Fletcher and Keith Roberts, lending the songs a pastoral sadness, oddly reminiscent of Barry Dransfield's mournful early '70s folk ballads and the more wistful corners of Love's *Forever Changes*. The relentless mood of solitary contemplation might not have been exactly what Polydor were hoping for. The album didn't sell, but as a 45 the title track did make it into the Top 100 in America for one week.

Thankfully, the actor's fortunes quickly improved, with a job narrating a new animated children's TV series called Mr Benn, leading to a lucrative career recording voiceovers for TV adverts. The singing career was abandoned. "I haven't carried on writing songs," says Brooks.

He currently has no idea who owns the rights to the album, but doesn't think anyone would be interested in reissuing it anyway. "Shouldn't think so," he says, a little downcast. "Doesn't matter. It's just life, isn't it. Nobody talks to me about the record. I'm just so pleased that you like it, but I can't do anything about it now."

Andrew Male

Gered Mankowitz

What became of the likely lads?*

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*They split up in 2004 in a blizzard of booze and drugs. They got back together and made a new album in Thailand. Q went along for the ride and, this month, brings you the full unexpurgated story of The Libertines' death-or-glory return...

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO MODERN MUSIC AND MORE. ON SALE NOW!

Black celebrations: Depeche Mode in ’93 (from left) Dave Gahan, Andy Fletcher, Martin Gore, Alan Wilder; (far right) the band in ’81 with Vince Clarke, second right.

BASILDONMONDE

Depeche Mode

International synth-rock conquerors. By David Buckley.

“I would rather die a thousand deaths than sound like Depeche Mode or Yazoo.” So griped The Human League’s Phil Oakey, reflecting how many regarded Depeche Mode in 1982 – as the runt of the synth-pop litter.

But no band from the early ’80s has endured as successfully as Depeche Mode. By working with Daniel Miller (co-producer of their first six albums and founder of the Mute label), they retained a control over their music afforded to very few. Unlike most of their contemporaries, they were able to move forward artistically: always a synth band to some extent, they nonetheless outgrew the breezy electro-pop of their first two albums to essentially become, by the late ’80s, a rock act. While some of their peers struggled to even perform live, Depeche Mode would also become a drilled, unstoppable, arena-filling touring force. “Depeche Mode at the beginning were this bubblegum band, a bit silly, really,” Gary Numan argues, “and then became this stadium, anthemic, drug-taking monster, and I just thought, Jesus, I love you!” By the mid- ’90s, the pace had taken its toll, with singer Dave Gahan collapsing into a four-year drug-induced abyss and soundscaper Alan Wilder leaving. Yet their global success has continued.

It must have irked principal songwriter Martin Gore that the song many still regard as their definitive single, Just Can’t Get Enough, was written by Vince Clarke, present for just the band’s first album before forming Yazoo and then Erasure, bands of a different evolutionary branch to the music made by Depeche Mode. But if the gloom, self-examination and biblical angst of Depeche Mode can make for exacting listening – though these are the exact same qualities that their fans thrive on – the juggernaut thrill of their best work remains compelling.

> **“THEY WERE A BIT SILLY… THEN THEY BECAME THIS STADIUM, ANTHEMIC, DRUG-TAKING MONSTER.”**
> **Gary Numan**

CAST YOUR VOTES!

This month you chose your Top 10 Depeche Mode albums. Next month we want your Top 10 Cocteau Twins albums. Send your selections to www.mojo4music.com or e-mail your Top 10 to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk with the subject ‘How To Buy Cocteaus’ and we’ll print the best comments.

DEPECHE MODE
A BROKEN FRAME

10 Depeche Mode
A Broken Frame

MUTE 1982. LATEST EDITION 2013 SONY MUSIC BMG, £9.99

You Say: “Just because at the time it sounded perfect. Visionary.” Giovanni Rolla, MOJO Facebook

Although this may be the moment when Depeche Mode went into a short holding pattern before moving themselves away from full-blooded pop – many of these songs had been written much earlier by Martin Gore – there is still something unmistakably charming about songs including the delicate, hesitant Leave In Silence. Big single See You, a tale of a teenage lover reminiscing about an old affair, showed both that Gore could write lyrics that were able to touch the heart and that the band could survive without Vince Clarke’s songwriting. Clarke, incidentally, sent a message to the band that See You was the best Depeche Mode single.

DEPECHE MODE
BLACK CELEBRATION

4 Depeche Mode
Black Celebration

MUTE 1986. LATEST EDITION 2013 SONY MUSIC BMG, £6.43

You Say: “So gothy, so synthy, and so damned sexy!” Nicholas Simon, MOJO Facebook

This is Depeche Mode’s most radical album, influenced, said Daniel Miller, by Einstürzende Neubauten and Test Department. Released at a time when almost every other electro act of the 1980-81 vintage had burnt out, this is the sound of a former pop band reaching out intelligently to a new audience. Recorded in London and mixed at Hansa in Berlin, *Black Celebration* is dark and menacing on the likes of Stripped (constructed around a treated sample of motorbike engine) and A Question Of Time. The album sold 500,000 copies in Germany, beginning the European love affair with the band that continues to this day.

Photoshot, Rex

DEPECHE MODE

9 Depeche Mode Construction Time Again

MUTE 1983. LATEST EDITION 2013 SONY MUSIC BMG, £7.74

You Say: "The first glimpse of their goth-industrial side." Brian Kerr, via e-mail

The arrival of Alan Wilder as a full-time band member coincided with a move away from the conventional synth pop of the group's previous two long players into something far weightier, layered and more obviously produced. *Construction Time Again* was the first Depeche Mode album to be worked on at Hansa Studios in Berlin, a few years earlier the sonic experimental lab for David Bowie, Eno and Iggy Pop, and here a German electronic influence is palpable. The exemplar of the new semi-industrial Modesound is Everything Counts: a weave of found audio and pop melody, its attack on harsh corporate culture is one of Gore's best-ever lyrics.

DEPECHE MODE
playing the angel

8 Depeche Mode Playing The Angel

MUTE 2005. LATEST EDITION 2013 SONY MUSIC BMG, £5.59

You Say: "The last really good DM album. Gahan's first stabs at songwriting for the band too." Paul Emery, MOJO Facebook

After the mildly underwhelming *Exciter* (2001), Depeche Mode kicked on again with this, their finest collection of songs since *Violator*. The first single, Precious, is an almost unbearable tale of marital collapse addressed to the child caught in the middle: its melody, like that of 2013's Heaven, is meltingly romantic. Gahan's Suffer Well has an earthy riff and a raw self-evaluation, asking, "Where were you when I fell from grace/Frozen heart, an empty space." Opener A Pain That I'm Used To, meanwhile, commences with a surge of klaxon-like noise that instantly signals a return to themes of darkness and terror.

Depeche Mode

7 Depeche Mode Speak And Spell

MUTE 1981. LATEST EDITION 2013 SONY MUSIC BMG, £7.76

You Say: "The pop Depeche Mode, before the darkness fell." Pete Brock, via e-mail

With hindsight, Depeche Mode's first album – a collection of songs by teenage Bowie and Kraftwerk fans from Essex – is an oddity. Penned mainly by Vince Clarke, it's cheeky, light in mood and heavy on Human League-inspired monophonic hooks. But it would take a heart of steel not to respond to it warmly. New Life, still one of their finest pop moments, is all youthful enthusiasm, weaves of implausibly hooky synths and Twist And Shout-like backing vocals, while Just Can't Get Enough is now so hegemonic as to be re-lyric'd and sung in football stadiums around the globe. Listen to *Speak And Spell* next to *Songs Of Faith And Devotion*, and shudder.

DEPECHE MODE
the BEST of

6 Depeche Mode The Best Of… Volume 1

MUTE 2006. LATEST EDITION 2013 SONY MUSIC BMG, £9.70

You Say: "The easily digested volume is proof of what makes them so great." Chris Harper, via e-mail

Spanning 1981's breakthrough New Life up to their last major UK hit single, Precious, this non-chronological 18-track compilation is the perfect Mode primer. It is, frankly, all-killer: whip-cracking S&M tune Master And Servant managed to get by the BBC censor where Frankie Goes To Hollywood's Relax failed, People Are People ponders with tart poignancy, "I can't understand, what makes a man hate another man?", while the crunching beats of later '80s material puts one instantly in mind of a sell-out arena waving rhizomatically as one. The limited edition reissue from 2013 contains a bonus DVD of 23 videos.

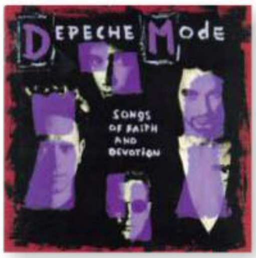
DEPECHE MODE
ULTRA

5 Depeche Mode Ultra

MUTE 1997. LATEST EDITION 2013 SONY MUSIC BMG, £13.03

You Say: "The variety of textures… make this album a hard-won victory for a band trying like hell to get back on their feet." Nick Farr, MOJO Facebook

It's hard to make an album when your lead singer seems intent on destroying himself. Dave Gahan's Messianic, delusional journey came to an end when an overdose almost killed him in 1996. Not fit for purpose until a successful spell in rehab, Gahan then finished off what would be a chill and brittle album, lyrically best captured by the second single, It's No Good. But what makes *Ultra* special are its sonics, both a reconnection with their *Violator*-era selves but now with the impetus of harder beats courtesy of producer Tim Simenon of Bomb The Bass. Also on drums – Can's Jaki Liebezeit and Tackhead's Keith LeBlanc.



3 Depeche Mode Songs Of Faith And Devotion

MUTE 1993. LATEST EDITION 2013 SONY MUSIC BMG, £9.99

You Say: "Didn't care for it when it came out, but it grew on me like you wouldn't believe." Scott Christy, MOJO Facebook

Here the fug of confusion replaced the clear lines of *Violator*, and the result was a horror story of a record. Between 1990 and 1993, Dave Gahan underwent a transformation of Frankensteinian proportions: believing that the world needed a "proper" rock star, he created the monster that would suffer several drug-induced brushes with death. The music became gothic and dense and the themes forbidding, repositioning the band as essentially a rock act: while opener I Feel You was likened to "the monolith in 2001", the real gem is Walking In My Shoes, a reflection on the loneliness and excesses of stardom.

MUSIC FOR THE MASSES
DEPECHE MODE

2 Depeche Mode Music For The Masses

MUTE 1987. LATEST EDITION 2013 SONY MUSIC BMG, £7.38

You Say: "The songwriting is consistently strong… not a bad song on it." Enda Hasson, MOJO Facebook

"We always thought that electronic music was something that could be played in stadiums and to large audiences," said Martin Gore. On the back of underground exposure on the alternative scene, Depeche Mode duly exploded as a Stateside stadium act in 1987/88 with this magisterial album. The 'rocktronica' here is powerfully charged – lead-off single Never Let Me Down Again would provide a giddying climax to their live act while Strangelove and Behind The Wheel remain dark, polished gems. The title, meanwhile, was an ironic comment on what the band saw as the uncommerciality of the music within. How wrong they were.

Depeche mode
violator

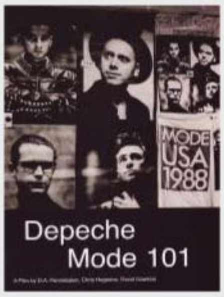
1 Depeche Mode Violator

MUTE 1990. LATEST EDITION 2013 SONY MUSIC BMG, £6.09

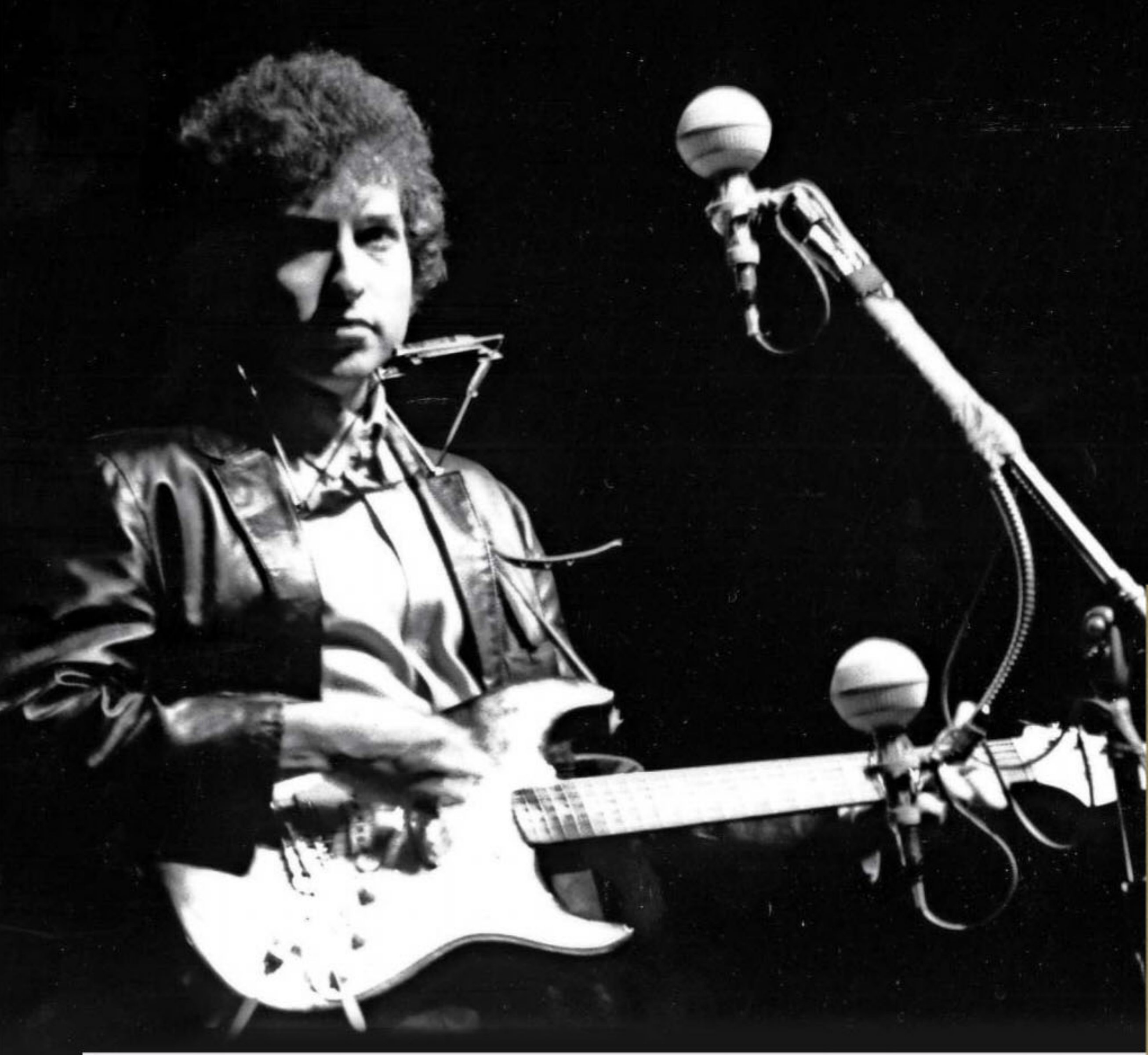
You Say: "Best so far." Felix Rodrigo Guzman, MOJO Facebook

Their first US Top 10 LP and a huge global success, this was a career-defining moment. *Violator*'s two stand-outs, Personal Jesus and Enjoy The Silence, had been pre-album release hits: Personal Jesus boasts a beast of a riff; Enjoy The Silence has arguably the band's finest melody. (Also a key DM moment: Anton Corbijn's beautifully shot video with Gahan crossing a snowfield, dressed as a medieval monarch, carrying a deckchair). With other stand-outs Policy Of Truth and World In My Eyes, this is uniquely innovative and accessible Mode.

NOW DIG THIS



Depeche Mode are perhaps even better on stage than on the iPod and an essential purchase is the Live 101 DVD (Mute, £11.19). A 1988 recording in Pasadena, it's the moment electronic music crossed over into stadia. Other excellent concert footage can be found on Live In Berlin (Columbia, £23.99) from the 2013 Delta Machine tour. The best biography is by Steve Malins, simply entitled Depeche Mode (Andre Deutsch, 2000) – a revised and updated edition was published in 2013 by the same company – while a fully authorised book is one for the future, it is to be hoped.



No hard feelings: folk's Judas and rock's Messiah at Newport, 1965.

Getty Images

Two tribes

Deep analysis of Dylan's most infamous performance and the resulting cultural clash. By Mat Snow.

Dylan Goes Electric! Newport, Seeger, Dylan, And The Night That Split The Sixties

★★★★★

Elijah Wald

HARPER COLLINS. £16.99

The legend: at the 1965 Newport Festival Bob Dylan takes the stage as the folkies' pet protest poet, plugs in, cranks up to 11, and is booed off, a performance which, in a short, traumatic delivery, gives birth to 'rock' – the subculture and soundtrack determined to do its own thing, no matter what.

The world: never the same again, etc.

The truth: way more complicated, way more nuanced, yet no less dramatic for all that.

Insofar as anyone can nail what happened and its significance, it is Elijah Wald. An academic and author, he has a tremendous track record in tapping the sources, weighing the evidence and presenting his findings in revelatory books on Robert Johnson, the blues in general, and the history of what really has been popular in pop during the golden era of recorded sound.

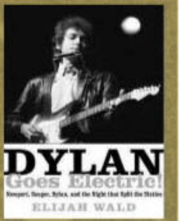
With its title screamer giving a false impression of Wald's unswervingly measured tone, lucid style and disdain for sensationalism, Dylan Goes Electric! may be his best yet, digging deeper into well-trodden ground than ever before, finding all sorts of nuggets to modify the myth and remap the years that lead up to and follow that controversial Sunday evening, July 25, half a century ago.

> "DIGGING DEEPER INTO WELL-TRODDEN GROUND THAN EVER, FINDING ALL SORTS OF NUGGETS."

The other side of that crowd-splitting performance is the furious reaction of Pete Seeger, the patriarch of the folk revival, 22 years older than Dylan and no stranger to controversy himself. Like Bob, Pete was both acclaimed and condemned as a non-purist populist, but, unlike Bob, officially blacklisted as well as fêted. He had more than earned his right to an opinion, as had many of a colourful and fascinating dramatis personae here, all passionately engaged with folk music and what it should or should not be – Baez, Bikel, Lomax, Yarrow and so on, a cast list where only the mixed-bag star-maker manager Albert Grossman is hard to like.

Their forum was the Newport Folk Festival, in the early '60s the booming offshoot of the Jazz Festival and held within earshot of the town's Rhode Island naval base, an irony not lost on the peacenik tribes who gathered in ever-larger numbers in those years when the Cold War segued into the mission creep of Vietnam. Galvanised by the Civil Rights movement, the crowds – ranging from college kids to New Dealers and anti-fascist Second World War veterans – came not only for music but for a sense of solidarity in the struggle to reclaim America from the masters of war and Madison Avenue. And music was not just music but the voice of that struggle for the authentic Promised Land. Everyone was an idealist, but where could one agree an ideal in the tension between community and individuality, between honouring the past and creating the future? Hence the boos (and competing cheers) which launched Bob Dylan as folk's Judas but rock's messiah.

More cock-up than masterplan, Dylan at Newport in 1965 was a clash with no losers nor sustained hard feelings. Seeger supportively reassessed Dylan's path, while, now 74, the former rebel remains true to what he always was, a visionary rooted in the songs of his country, singing to the people, face to face. If that ain't folk, what is?



DYLAN
Goes Electric!
ELIJAH WALD

WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- The American folk movement was a broad church but seldom broad-minded. Catcalls of 'folkum', 'fakelore', 'Bohemian' and 'Babbitt balladeers' abounded.
- Dylan was not the first to go electric at Newport – but no one booed John Lee Hooker, The Swan Silvertones, The Staple Singers or The Chambers Brothers.
- Did Pete Seeger threaten to chop Dylan's power cables with an axe? Nope. A myth based on a misunderstanding but conjuring such a dramatic image even Seeger himself half-came to credit it.
- Was Dylan bombarded by the front rows of fans with harmonicas in the key of E since he had mislaid his own? Yup, really happened.

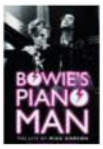
Bowie's Piano Man: The Life Of Mike Garson

★★★

Clifford Slapper

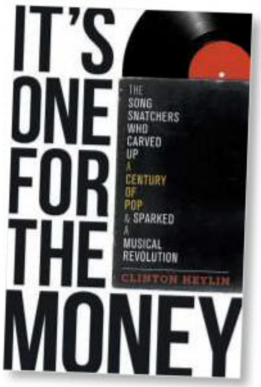
FANTOM. £19.99

Biog of *Aladdin Sane* pianist, by the musician-composer who played the Bowie piano part on his Extras appearance!



Mike Garson is well worthy of accolades, and there are plenty in this book. Every chapter opens with a statement such as, "Garson is well known for the diversity of music he plays." That's demonstrably true, but it often makes the biography read like a press release. The time frame is confused, and beyond the entertaining story of Garson's spell in a military band, we get little sense of his life before Mick Ronson auditioned him. Slapper gives us welcome musical insights – yet they are unaccompanied by any context. For instance, it's over 100 pages before there's a brief mention of Garson's involvement in Scientology, the cult which had a dramatic effect on the Bowie camp's vibe at the time. A welcome tribute to a great musician, this book could have been so much more.

Paul Trynka


IT'S ONE FOR THE MONEY
THE SONG SNATCHERS WHO CARVED UP A CENTURY OF POP & SPARKED A MUSICAL REVOLUTION
CLINTON HEYLIN

It's One For The Money

★★★★

Clinton Heylin

CONSTABLE. £20

A century of cut-and-shut pop music.

If Clinton Heylin is to be believed – and he's come up with one hell of a convincing argument in this tome – then there's little in popular music that's totally original. And, having fashioned something from the particles of pop's past that appeals to a record-buying public, the songwriter is sure to lose out to others who know the value of song credits and resulting royalties. Here, Heylin digs way back and, while acknowledging that even Rabbie Burns reassembled sounds and words that had been around forever, kick-starts his investigation into contemporary song-snatchers with those, who, like W.C. Handy, turned the blues into a personal money-box. Then, via an eminently readable trawl through the rise of country music and rock, he reveals how Johnny Cash plagiarised Gordon Jenkins and Jimmy Page appropriated the work of Jake Holmes. The additional cast of guilty thousands includes Jimmie Rodgers, Lonnie Donegan, Alan Freed, Oasis… well, everybody, really. Fascinating stuff, intensively researched and utterly intriguing.

Fred Dellar

Jolly Lad

★★★★

John Doran

STRANGE ATTRACTOR. £14.99

Drugs, drink and music journalism from The Quietus co-founder.

Stumbling into journalism after an impressed publisher endured a drunken rant about wanting to execute Coldplay, John Doran had already spent years working shifts in factories in St Helens and Hull. This gave him an appreciation for paid writing and an insatiable appetite for derangement. For years, a night out with Doran might include crack, acid and gallons of booze, concluding in hospital visits: "I felt like an X-ray of a photocopy of a Polaroid of a ghost," he describes one drug comedown. An anti-misery memoir and alternative music celebration, Jolly Lad – the title's a pun on *jolie laide* ("beautifully ugly") – is full of rock star encounters and one-liners as memorably droll as you'd expect from a Fall fan. With brutal honesty it also reminds that sometimes it's the writers who lead lives larger and more interesting than many of their media-managed musician subjects.

Ben Myers

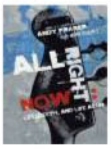
All Right Now: Life, Death, And Life Again

★★★★

Andy Fraser with Mark Hughes

FORULI CODEX. £9.99

How Free's teenage prodigy mislaid his mojo but found himself.



After years of surviving AIDS, Andy Fraser died in March aged 62, his fame founded on what he achieved before his 20th birthday. To add to the song from 1970 which everyone knows, Free's All Right Now, is another which found its moment 38 years later, the presidential campaign tribute Obama (Yes We Can). In between came a career which fell out of focus. An occasionally inspired songsmith and inventive, funky bassist, he aspired to the total musicality of Stevie Wonder but could never follow through. Accepting he was gay was a distraction, he thinks, but one wonders whether shedloads of hash helped – or being cushioned by income from a classic rock song literally never off the radio. This posthumous memoir, with often challenging asides from interviewer Mark Hughes, reflects on how bands make up and break up, talents lose their way, but human beings find themselves.

Mat Snow

David Bowie: The Music And The Changes

★★★

David Buckley

OMNIBUS PRESS. £10.95

Updated guide to Bowie's music, now with the 2013 comeback assessed.

DAVID BOWIE THE MUSIC AND THE CHANGES

With Bowie's cultural cache now having leapfrogged The Beatles', there are now more books than ever. MOJO contributor David Buckley's Strange Fascination, a warm, well-tuned biography, remains among the best. This revised edition of his 1996 consumer's guide is aimed squarely at the entry level market and adopts an album-by-album format with individual song breakdowns. It's well-judged (Fame should have been on *Station To Station*, *Earthling* was the last album to break new ground) and packs the odd surprise. Who knew that *Labyrinth* is Bowie's third biggest-selling download album? There are provocations (the defence of Across The Universe) and neat observations (Mick Ronson's playing is "as friendly as the man himself". A reclusive man in New York, who once enjoyed this book so much he had copies printed for promo, will be roaring his approval all over again.

Mark Paytress

Nirvana Diary

★★★★

Steve Gullick

PLEDGEMUSIC. £55

Lavishly presented, sweat-soaked photo portfolio of the grunge icons.

In light of the recent Kurt Cobain: Montage Of Heck documentary and its harrowing account of Nirvana's disintegration, Steve Gullick's exquisite photographic tome establishes a timely meditative silence in which to focus on their triumphs. Collating many previously unpublished images over 196 pages, Nirvana Diary distils some key career moments – both on-stage and off – as captured by Gullick's lens between 1991 and 1993. Despite omitting their *Bleach* era, it compensates inventively. Sidestepping the implied obligation of its title, Gullick assembles his iconic Nirvana portraits within a vast photographic constellation of their contemporaries, including TAD, Pearl Jam, Pavement and a delightfully incongruous shot of the Melvins visiting Disneyland. In less capable hands this peripheral gaze could prove distracting, yet the opposite is true here: viewed in context, Nirvana seem even more distinctive. Intimate, moving and electrifying, this is an essential contribution not only to Nirvana's iconographic record, but the early 1990s alternative rock scene, too.

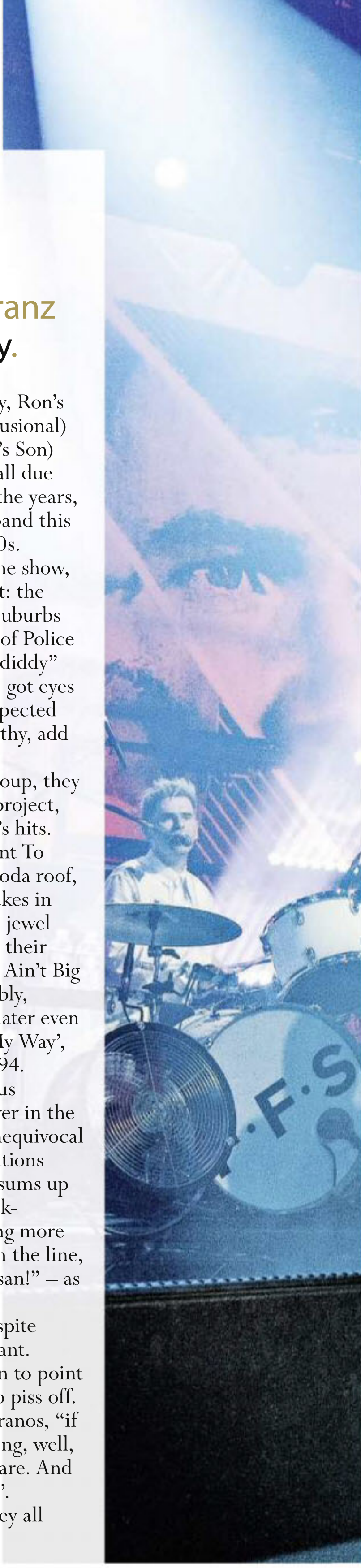
George Garner

Nirvana, 1991: intimate, moving, and distinctive.

©Steve Gullick

Alpha Maels

Contrary to the title of their most amusing co-write, this Sparks-Franz Ferdinand alliance is hot-hot-hot on-stage, gasps Andrew Perry.



Western union: (main image) Russell, centre, with Alex Kapranos fronting (from left) Franz Ferdinand drummer Paul Thomson, bassist Bob Hardy and Ron Mael; (bottom row, from left) Alex; Ron; two Maels and AK; guitarist Nick McCarthy; collaborators at work.

FFS

Le Bataclan, Paris

When FFS's self-titled album first landed in MOJO's postbag, the response was a resounding "Wow!", followed by, "Well, obviously…" Though lines of communication between the rock scenes in Glasgow and Los Angeles haven't been copious over the years, Franz Ferdinand, who cracked America as well as Blighty with their 2004 debut, have always had a Sparksian outsider queasy-comedy to their songcraft. They even aped the glam/disco maestros' *Indiscreet* album sleeve from 1975, with a similar road accident scene on 2009's *Tonight*.

Sparks – aka Mael brothers, Russell, 66, and Ron, 70 next month – first reached out to young Franz 11 years ago. So the story goes, it was only in 2013, after Alex Kapranos cracked a tooth in Uruguay and ran into the Maels in 'Frisco while looking for Huey Lewis's dentist, that their plan to work together took flight. Schedules, be damned!

The resultant album, under that droll Twittery acronym, was co-composed via e-mailed sound files, but captured live-in-the-room at London's RAK studios, paving the way for their 'new band' taking to the boards. Both sides are plainly revelling in the frisson of risk.

"The first time we walked on-stage together at [Scots indie mecca] Glasgow Art School," says Kapranos, backstage at the Bataclan, "a lot of people were just looking up, like, (*puzzled face*), 'Yeah, they're actually doing this!'"

Three dates further into FFS's road life, they've rolled up in a Paris engulfed by summer humidity. With characteristic decency, the Franz quartet have taken a dressing room half the size of Ron and Russell's, but it's impossible to breathe in there.

The venue itself, a 3,000-capacity faux-Chinese *salle de spectacle* chiefly built for vaudeville theatre *à la* Maurice Chevalier, is spiritually a good match, but a touch *bijou* – Franz are still very much a Top 5 act in France, and the place is rammed, sweat dripping from the ceiling before FFS even appear.

When they do, to an encore-worthy ovation, and launch into album opener Johnny Delusional, the indubitable correctness of their coupling is plain to see and hear. Kapranos is centrestage, with Russell and Ron either side (the former wafting around in a floaty black chemise), and the Franz band grouped behind. The audio balance is equally pleasing: Russell Mael's falsetto, still in fabulous shape, works a treat with Kapranos's garrulous tenor sitting warmly beneath.

The music they make in alliance has a new, third identity, something neither side could achieve alone: you won't find, say, Ron's gambolling, housey piano (Johnny Delusional) or Chopinesque finger-work (Dictator's Son) anywhere in Franz's canon; and, with all due respect to their various hirelings over the years, Sparks surely haven't had an art-rock band this kick-ass behind them since the mid '70s.

As they air *FFS*'s entirety through the show, its diversity of mood becomes apparent: the simmering, sad Little Guy From The Suburbs rubs shoulders with the bouncy jollity of Police Encounters, whose "bomp bom diddy diddy" choruses, fabulous, shrieked line, "I've got eyes for the policeman's wiiiiife!" and unexpected crowd-surf from guitarist Nick McCarthy, add up to a chaotic highlight.

Yet, unlike many a churlish supergroup, they fully enforce the validity of their new project, while sprinkling in three of each band's hits. Near the start, a stomping Do You Want To threatens to blow off Le Bataclan's pagoda roof, while a second-half dream sequence takes in both Sparks' sublime Moroder-steered jewel The Number One Song In Heaven *and* their ivory-pumping glam classic This Town Ain't Big Enough For Both Of Us. Understandably, Kapranos looks happy afterwards. He later even gets to sing When Do I Get To Sing 'My Way', his favourite heartstring-tugger from '94.

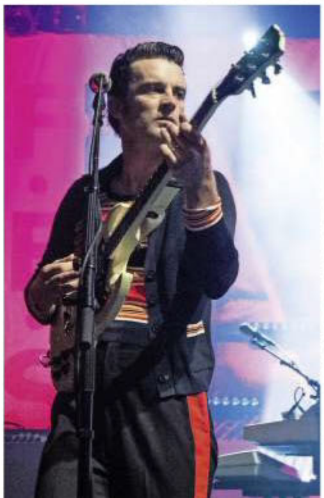
Despite set-closer Piss Off's hilarious isolationism, the Maels look bowled over in the face of a Franz-scale reception. The unequivocal five-star show climaxes with Collaborations Don't Work, the FFS song which best sums up their shared irreverent humour, its rock-operatic absurdity suddenly summoning more sobering thoughts of Vichy France with the line, "I ain't no collaborator! I am the partisan!" – as all good art-rock should.

Backstage afterwards, there's no respite from the melting heat, but all are jubilant. Russell Mael, ever a sweetheart, is keen to point out that they're not telling their fans to piss off. "Equally," adds a less conciliatory Kapranos, "if the world isn't enjoying what we're doing, well, they *can* piss off, because we certainly are. And I think the audience tonight were, too".

"Amen, bro!" chuckles Ron, and they all high-five. This one may run and run.

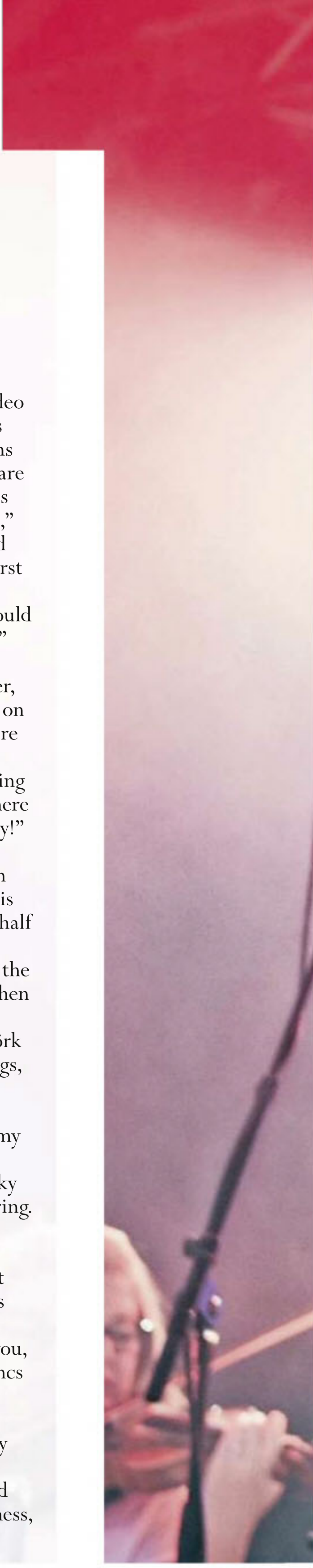
> "SPARKS SURELY HAVEN'T HAD AN ART-ROCK BAND THIS KICK-ASS BEHIND THEM SINCE THE MID '70s."

Getty Images (6)



SETLIST

Johnny Delusional / The Man Without A Tan / Save Me From Myself / Do You Want To / Little Guy From The Suburbs/ Dictator's Son / The Power Couple / Things I Won't Get / So Desu Ne / The Number One Song In Heaven / Michael / This Town Ain't Big Enough For Both Of Us / Police [illegible]ers / Take Me Out [illegible] //When Do I Get [illegible] My Way' / Call [illegible] [illegible]aborations [illegible]rk



Anger is an energy

Björk returns to Manchester International Festival with another, very different triumph. By Anna Wood.

Björk

Castlefield Arena, Manchester

Castlefield Arena is cobbled, and it's between the Museum Of Science & Industry and the Manchester Ship Canal. Four years ago, Björk played *Biophilia* round the corner in a Victorian market hall, also as part of the Manchester International Festival – a relatively new biennial arts event that encourages collaboration and disdains compromise (eg: Damon Albarn creates an Alice In Wonderland musical; Jamie xx works with Olafur Eliasson on a Jonathan Safran Foer adaptation; Maxine Peake is a malevolent shape-shifter soundtracked by Nico Muhly and Antony).

Tonight, Björk walks on to the stage dressed very much like a little moth, sturdy and luminous, with heavy clumping shoes. She's got a 15-piece string section with her (from the Heritage Orchestra), all dressed in white, as well as *Vulnicura* co-producer Haxan Cloak (introduced by Björk, Cilla-style, as "Bobby from Wakefield") and Manu Delago on hang and other percussion (just as he was for *Biophilia*). She opens with Stonemilker from *Vulnicura*, but this live version is slower and softer. "Moments of clarity are so rare," she sings, as multiple versions of herself sing too on the backdrop. "Show me emotional respect/I have emotional needs."

Vulnicura, we know, documents the painful breakup of Björk's relationship with artist Matthew Barney; tonight she sings almost all of that album, with its raging and its almost-healing. Her voice is less synthesized than on the record, and the bass – in this lovely concrete and stone amphitheatre – is booooming. There are pulses and echoes; a train goes right past the stage on the Deansgate viaduct (the driver has his head sticking out of a window, glimpsing a bit of the show en route to Bolton) but you can't hear a peep from it over the thudding and soaring of the music. During Black Lake, Björk stands in a pelvis-out, head-down slump, like Kevin The Teenager, as she sings, "Family was always our sacred mutual mission/Which you abandoned." She stomps like a toddler, the crowd whoops, and sweet strings come in to soothe us. Family is spooky, lurching and echoing, it's almost a horror score as she sings, "Father… mother… child." The backdrop shows Björk splayed on a rock, stitching up her own wounded chest.

And then, almost halfway through the set, she plays Notget and that livid heartache begins to shift into something else. The violins are almost like the stabbing strings in Psycho, the percussion shakes and judders, there are mating moths and hatching larvae on the video screen, dense green and then pink fireworks whoosh up behind the stage, and Björk seems cheered, marching, almost military – there are echoes of Army Of Me. "I will not forget this notget/Will you not regret having love let go," she sings, punching downwards, shaking and twitching. It segues right into Hunter (the first song tonight that isn't from *Vulnicura*), with whipcracks and that sly lyric, "I thought I could organise freedom/How Scandinavian of me." Bachelorette (also from 1997's *Homogenic*) warms things up further – the sound is fuller, the lighting is warmer, Björk is smiling and, on that insects-as-metaphors big screen, slugs are dangling in mid-air, spinning as they mate.

"Graham Massey is here," she says, seeming to wave to the Mancunian musician somewhere in the arena. "Say hurrah for Graham Massey!" The cheers get even louder when the crowd realise she's playing Army Of Me (co-written and co-produced by Massey). It's not that this second half of the set is the cheerful, happy half – it's more like the rage is blossoming into something gorgeous. Army Of Me is louder, the lights are brighter, she is aggressive, regal. Then it flows into 5 Years, the bass drops away, beautiful swooning strings take over and Björk is almost skipping across the stage as she sings, "You can't handle love, baby."

There's a lightness, a bounce even, in Quicksand and on Wanderlust: "I have lost my origin/And I don't want to find it again." Tumbling rage propels Mouth Mantra, the sky is darker now and the stage lights are stuttering. On Mutual Core, as snakes writhe on the screen behind her (hi, Freud!), Björk has a cockiness, a loucheness; she saunters, almost teasing, as she sings, "This eruption/Undoes stagnation/You didn't know/I had it in me."

She regards the arena, jubilant: "Thank you, Manchester." As she strides off, adoring Mancs yell themselves hoarse. The encore is Hyperballad, gentle and soaring. Venus and Jupiter are actually visible in the night sky just by the stage. Björk sings with the crowd, "Safe up here with you," and more fireworks fly into the blackness, further and brighter this time.

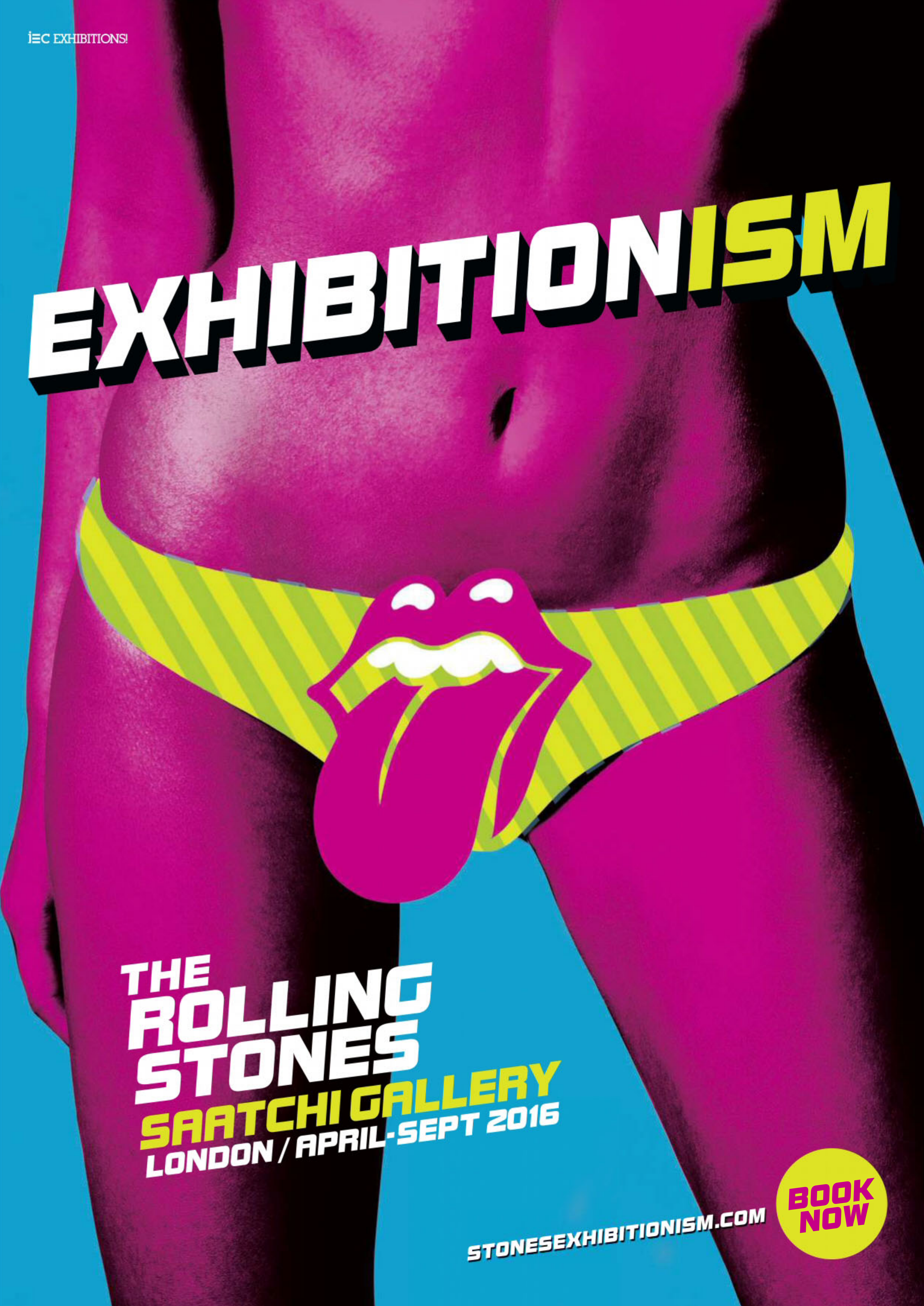
Lepidopteran love: Björk "like a little moth, sturdy and luminous" beguiles and thrills Manchester; (bottom row, centre) the full stage with the 15-piece string section from the Heritage Orchestra.

"ON THE INSECTS-AS-METAPHORS BIG SCREEN, SLUGS ARE DANGLING IN MID-AIR SPINNING AS THEY MATE."

Carsten Windhorst (5)

SETLIST

Stonemilker / Lionsong / Black Lake / Family / Notget / Hunter / Bachelorette / Possibly Maybe / Where Is The Line / Army Of Me / 5 Years / Quicksand / Wanderlust / Mouth Mantra / Mutual Core / Hyperballad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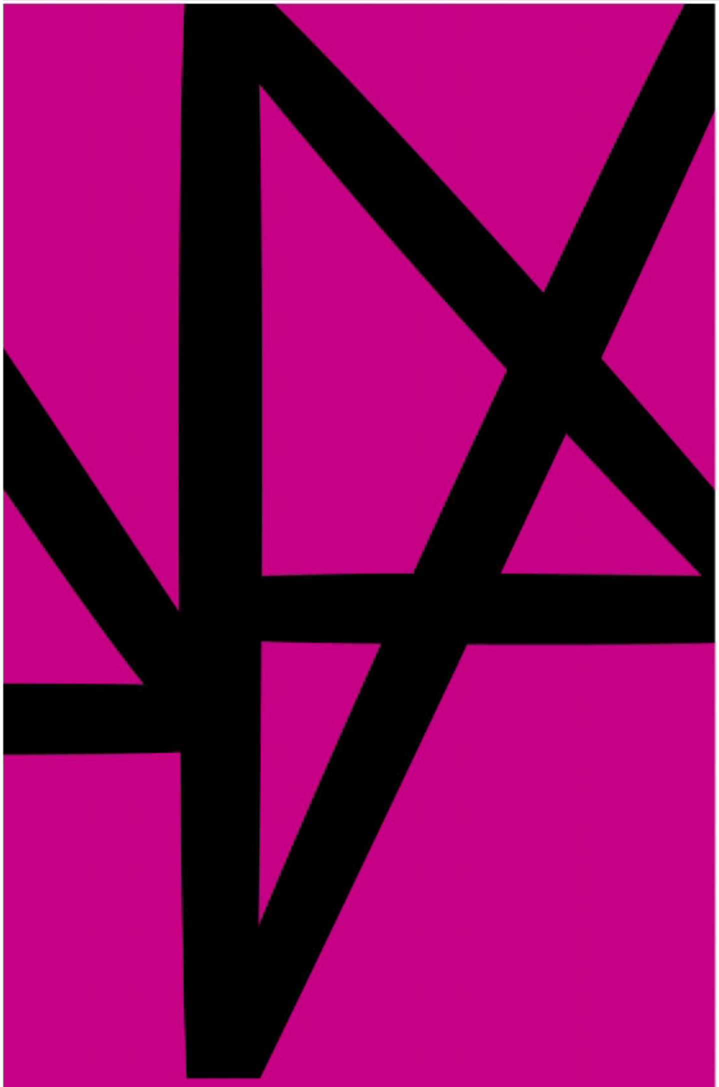

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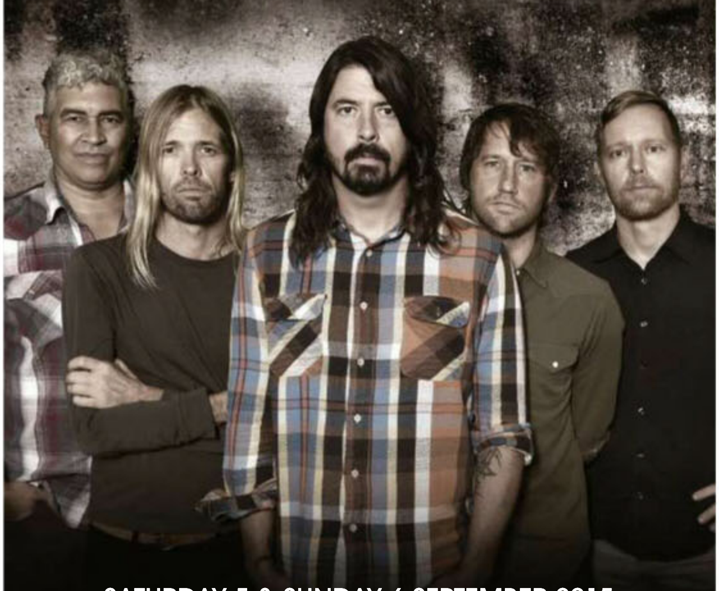

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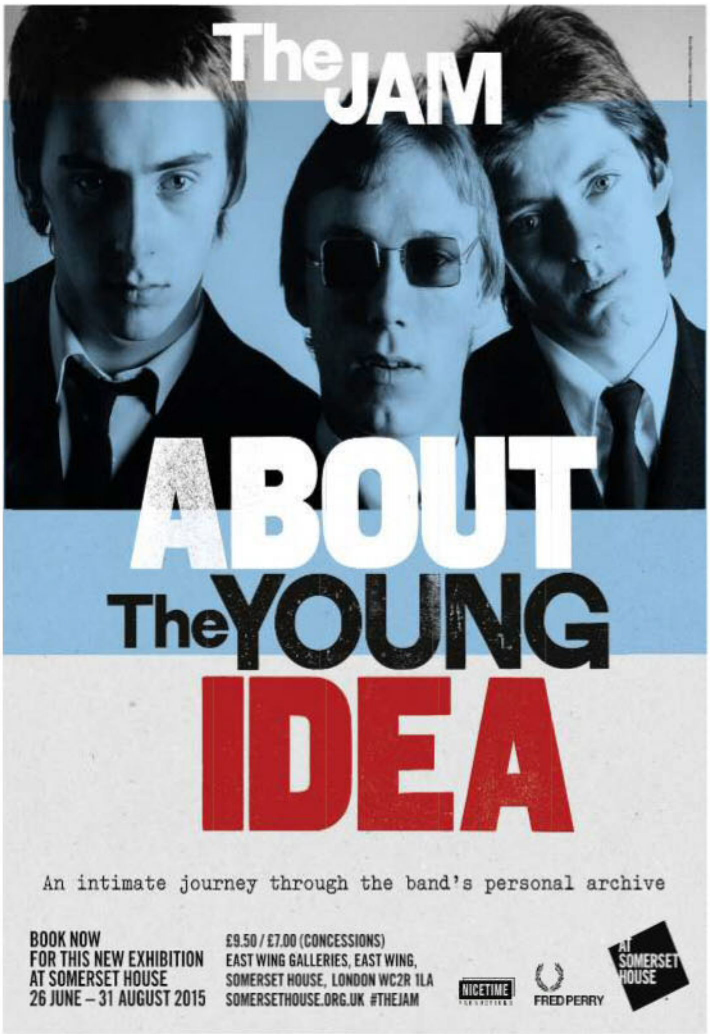

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ONE-PARTY TIME

WHO CROSSED THE IRON CURTAIN?

Dabble in notions of the bizarre as antidotes to the commonplace? You're in the right spot: cue the doo wop, hip hop and protest pop!

I was struck (if not surprised) by news that Laibach are to be the first name pop/rock band to play in North Korea – which they describe as "a reclusive garrison state well-known for its military marches, mass gymnastics and hymns to the Great Leader" – in August. But which group first played in a totalitarian country as we'd understand it today?

Keith Ulrich, via e-mail

Fred says: No easy answer to this. The first rock band to play in a communist country was Deep Purple, who in 1975 performed in relatively liberal Yugoslavia. The first Western act to play in Russia (then the USSR) was The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band in 1976 followed by Boney M in '78, who were allegedly invited to sing in Red Square by Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev himself! As for degenerate non-rock Western music, Benny Goodman and Earl 'Fatha' Hines took jazz to the USSR in 1962 and 1966 respectively, and Paul Robeson sang there in 1958. In the '80s, pop visits behind the Iron Curtain were more common, with gigs in the region by the likes of Pink Floyd, UB40, Uriah Heep and Nico to name but a few, plus Wham!'s famous trip to China in 1985. We should also mention the Manic Street Preachers' visit to Cuba in 2001, and Morrissey's announcement in 2008, "I would love to sing in Tehran," though in the Islamic Republic of Iran government policy is that the "promotion of decadent and Western music should be avoided"!

WAS THE COASTERS' BELLY DANCER A TRUE LIFE TWIRLER?

Leiber & Stoller once wrote a song about a dancer named Little Egypt which The Coasters turned into a hit in the early '60s, and was covered by Elvis Presley in the film Roustabout. Was the song named after a real person?

Toni Rosen, via e-mail

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THE COASTERS

Fred says: Three belly dancers named Little Egypt came to the fore in the late 1800s: Fahreda Mazar Spyropoulos appeared at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago and reportedly later caused Mark Twain a near heart attack; Fatima Djamile appeared in early films Coochie Coochie Dance (1896) and Fatima (1897); Ashea Wabe hit the headlines in 1896 after she appeared at New York Fifth Avenue bachelor party which was raided by police. Leiber & Stoller's song Little Egypt (Ying Yang) was later covered by Cher, The Iveys, The Downliners Sect, Ray Stevens and others. After the release of Elvis's movie, a professional dancer sued Paramount, RCA and Elvis for $2.5 million claiming she did not authorise the use of her name. Luckily, Ms Egypt lost.

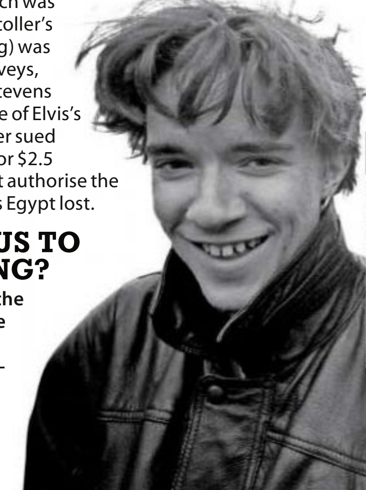
WHO INVITED US TO IDOL'S WEDDING?

I once heard that much of the success of Billy Idol's White Wedding was down to the efforts of some song-pluggers. What, if this true, did they do to promote the record so highly?

Barry Mullligan, Bath

Fred says: "Getting White Wedding away was a real triumph," recalled Oliver Smallman, the song-plugger concerned. "It was done without the artist being present in this country too. At one point, determined to get the record on the BBC playlist, I dressed up as the bride while my partner dressed up as Billy and we took the record to the BBC dressed in that way. After seeing us, we reckoned they wouldn't forget about the record. Then we flew a hydrogen-filled balloon up to the fourth floor and on the balloon was the message; 'Please put our record on the playlist.' We left it there until they eventually got someone to tell us to shove off."

JOHNNY'S GREATEST HITS
JOHNNY MATHIS



See you later, communist dictator: (clockwise from main) Boney M live it up in Moscow, 1978; Laibach with their official owl; DJ Fame – or is it DJ E.D.? – aka Liam Howlett; The Coasters' exotic dancer wax; Johnny Mathis's *Greatest Hits*.

WHO WAS THE FIRST GREATEST HITTER?

Whose was the first-ever *Greatest Hits* LP?

Jay Burge, via e-mail

Fred says: It's generally accepted that the first *Greatest Hits* compilation on vinyl was Johnny Mathis's *Johnny's Greatest Hits*, out on US Columbia in June 1958. Mathis recalled that he was supposed to record a new album around that time, but instead A&R honcho Mitch Miller chose to issue all Mathis's early singles on one record. "It was just another marketing ploy but nobody really started doing that until that album," he said. It stayed in the chart for 490 weeks, a record that lasted until Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side Of The Moon* some 15 years later.

WHAT WERE HOWLETT'S DJ ALIASES?

In Liam Howlett's interview (MOJO 259) he mentioned listening to Mike Allen's Capital Radio Show. I know he won the same DJ competition twice, under different names – what were the names?

David Skinner, via e-mail

Fred says: Liam told us, "Mike Allen had a competition, basically to do a three, four-minute mix – CJ Mackintosh, the DMC Mixing champion at the time, would be the judge. I entered it, but I thought I could do better, so I entered another one under a different name, and came first and third. DJ Fame from Braintree came first, DJ E.D. from Bocking was the other one – places that are literally a minute away from each other. I couldn't fucking believe it – I thought, I've deceived people, I've had the music business over!"

CONTACT FRED

Write to: Ask Fred, MOJO, Endeavour House, 189 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2H 8JG.

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For the rules of the quiz, send an SAE to that same address.

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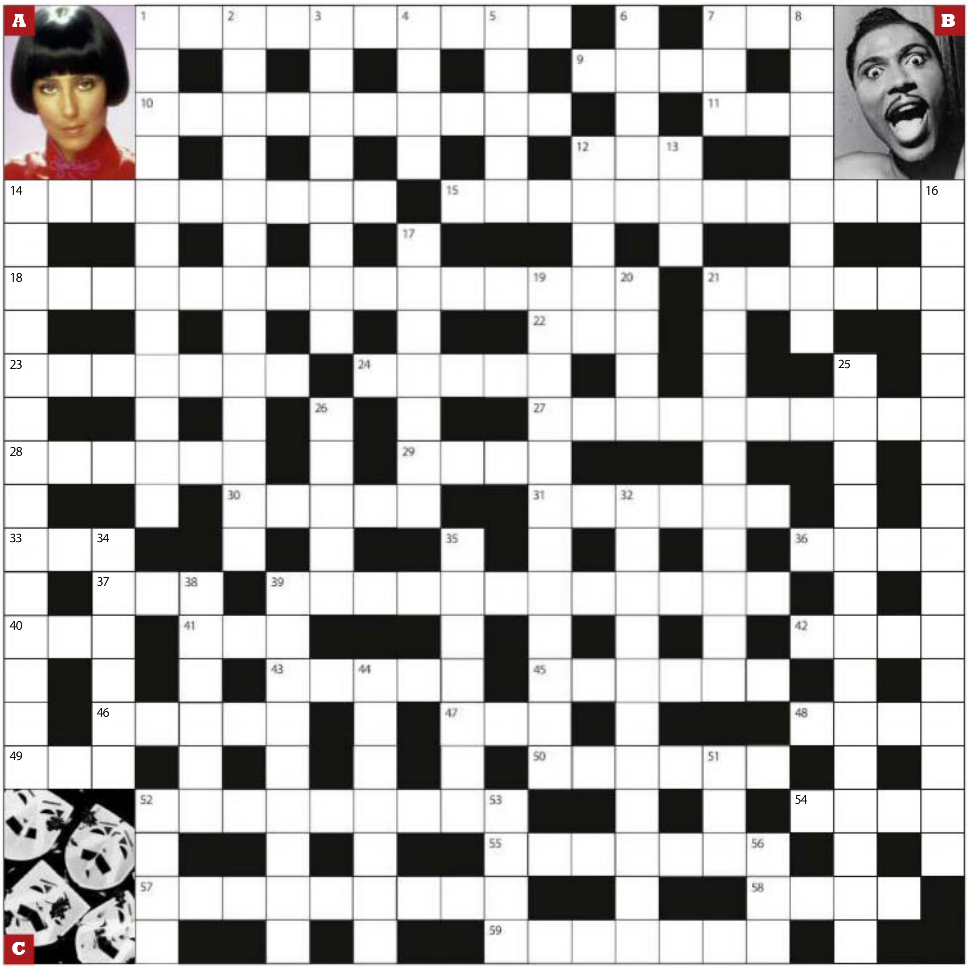
ANSWERS

MOJO 260

Across: Jimmy Page, 4 Sticky, 9 Chant Down Babylon, 11 Bassist, 13 Above The Clouds, 17 Lean On Me, 18 All My Trials, 20 Town, 21 Mob Rules, 22 Holiday, 24 Ask, 25 Hard, 26 Echo, 27 Crowes, 29 Bee Gees, 31 Mud, 32 Hip Hop, 33/36 Val Garay, 34 Save Me, 39 Showroom, 40 N-Joi, 41 N.Y.C.Man, 43 Bitch, 44 Settle, 45 Smog, 46 Petty, 47 Happy, 48 Two, 49 Apeman, 50 Blur, 52 Rehab, 53 Martha, 54 Toke, 55 Beth, 56 Sorted, 57 Moody, 58 Dirrty, 59 Dear.

Down: 1 Jackson Browne, 2 Yeti, 3 A Bomb In Wardour Street, 5 Tubthumping, 6 Coldcut, 7 Yankovic, 8 Oboe, 10 Arsenal, 12 Are You Ready, 14 V.O.A., 15 De La Soul, 16 Pet Shop Boys, 19 Lionel, 23 Yes, 24 Ahmad Jamal, 28 She's Not There, 30 Emancipation, 35 Souljacker, 37 Animal Army, 38 Singer, 41 Next, 42 Capo, 49 Abbey, 50 Baby D, 51 Ultra, 52 Rise.

Winner: Duncan Fletcher of **Barton-upon-Humber** wins a REGA RP3 turntable, Elys2 cartridge and Fono mini A2D.



Alamy (2)

ACROSS

1 AKA Rabbi Joseph Gordan? (6,4)
7 Dave's partner in soul (3)
9 Moan about a Bo Diddley success (4)
10 White Stripes found vacancy here (5,5)
11 Not that Mr Cohen, but those Steal My Sunshine hitmakers (3)
12 Label closely linked with Black Flag and Sonic Youth (1.1.1.)
14 Where The Beatles located a barber selling photographs (5,4)
15 Ethereal dream-poppers that once included Elizabeth Fraser (7,5)
18 Dylan really did need tracks for this chug-along 1979 arrival (4,5,6)
21 Genesis album that takes its name from the arrangement of the title track (6)
22 Bobby's Rubber Ball bounced high (3)
23 Their debut album was *The Thoughts Of Emerlist Davjack* (3,4)
24 Miles around this Beach Boys release (5)
27 His second solo album, Matador, was released this year (3,7)
28 Archimedes' cry used by New Orleans Brass Band (6)
29 All inclusive or named after a dog? (4)
30 Stretch out for a Survivor album (5)
31 Electronic dance music (6)
33 Initially King, Williams, St Joseph (1.1.1.)
36 Peter Murphy album that contains Marlene Dietrich's Favourite Poem (4)
37 Record shop chain (1.1.1.)
39 2Pac's 1996 question (3,2,1,4,2)
40/35d "See you before, I know your sort" etc (The Jam) (3,3,4)
41 The Quo famously left it in the sun (3)
42 See photoclue A (4)
43 Aerosmith's toy depository (5)
45 Equates with meat, says Morrissey (6)
46 Örn Benediktsson, once of The Sugarcubes (5)
47 Rita hidden amid Norah Jones? (3)
48 ---- *Country* (Paul Heaton album) (4)
49 Duane Eddy's yell of acquiescence (3)
50 Who does it better for Carly Simon? (6)
52 Hip hop star has sense direction (5,4)
54 Diana, once Queen of Motown (4)
55 A hug for this Danny McNamara-headed band (7)
57 Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow? they enquired (9)
58 Led Zeppelin's final studio album (4)
59 Rap one hit wonders with Whoomp! (There It Is) (3,4)

DOWN

1 Progressive Blues Experimenter (6,6)
2 See photoclue B (6,7)
3 Label/Ocean crossing made by Rod Stewart in 1975 (8)
4 But it was a hot one for Gwen Stefani (4)
5 ----- Cruise or a Norman Granz record label (5)
6 The Animals' Rising Sun abode (5)
7 Classix Nouveaux's Mr Solo (3)
8 Were they suited to be a Camden based Britpop outfit? (8)
12 Could be Sly, could be Joss (5)
13 Seattle grunge band located in a stadium (3)
14 Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds' first album without Mick Harvey (4,3,3,4)
16 '90s techno group that included Andrew Weatherall (6,2,8)
17 He introduced you to the Son Of Hickory Holler's Tramp (1.1.5)
19 Ray Charles' proud boast regarding a member of the opposite sex (1'2,3,1,5)
20 Desafinado tenorman Stan, (4)
21 See photoclue C (3,2,5)
25 Did keyboardist Brian Simpson and George Duke take smooth jazz to a higher level with this one? (5,3,6)
26 Keyboard instrument (5)
32 Bono's rector converts in bright-eyed manner (5,6)
34 Robert Wyatt album ewe might like nod off to (6)
35 See 40 Across
38 "This means nothing to me," claimed Ultravox (or was it Rigsby's cat?) (6)
39 Sonique album, a bit weepy (4,2,3)
44 Pink Floyd's impressive structure (3,4)
51 A short medical man, like country music star Watson, (3)
52 Those masked men or a Princely pucker-up (4)
53 The ---- (Chemical Brothers) (4)
56 Jazz label lost in Dec McManus (1.1.1.)

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THISMONTH

JULIAN 'HOOLIGAN' HEWINGS AND THESE ANIMAL MEN

The New Wave Of New Wave birthed them. But Britpop burst their football and doomed them.

Chimes of Speeed-dom: (above) These Animal Men at the time of '94's *(Come On Join) The High Society* (from left) Patrick Murray, Alexander Boag, Julian Hewings, Steve Hussey; (below right) promoting *Accident & Emergency* in '97; (below) Hooligan today.

HELLO MARCH 1993

One day I watched The Monkees' Head and had a major epiphany; Mickey Dolenz jumping off the bridge had a profound effect. In that moment These Animal Men was born. I had grown up with Patrick [Murray bassist] and we'd messed about in bands, rehearsing once a week, for fun mainly – the first was called The Sex Fuhrers. As kids we'd had 2 Tone, the Mod revival and skinhead culture but by the 1990s that was all gone and we were living on the Hollingbury estate in Brighton, surrounded by dance music. We felt rock'n'roll would die if we didn't stand up for it, so we put out an advert and [singer] Boag replied. I called a meeting and played Head to everyone and said this is the spirit in which this band should be, and here's how we're going to look. It was a totally fundamentalist approach to forming a band. We started dressing in the Freemans catalogue clothes of our childhoods – tight Adidas tops and boot-cut jeans – and the music followed. We all loved The Kinks and The Clash. It was boy's music, stuff that made you walk an inch taller. With a uniform we became a single-minded entity. Boag wrote Speeed King and I wrote You're Not My Babylon – our first two singles. We played them with S*M*A*S*H at the Richmond in Brighton soon after, and the next week we were in NME with Elastica and that lot, trumpeted as part of a scene, the New Wave Of New Wave. By Christmas we'd signed to Virgin after a bidding war that saw us racing across London in cars. It seemed easy. There was no real long-term career plan – touring small towns, releasing records and seeing our influence on kids was almost enough, because we were basically the fans who follow The Clash in Rude Boy, but in our own band.

> "WE WEREN'T EQUIPPED TO DEAL WITH PEOPLE... WE JUST CAME ACROSS AS RUDE."

GOODBYE MAY 1997

Things fell apart at the Brighton Essential festival. We went on before Embrace. We were doomed from the outset and knew this, so we embraced it fully. A month earlier our second album, *Accident & Emergency*, had been released to complete indifference. We had a fractious relationship with Stevie [Hussey, drums]. He had to be dragged off me on a number of occasions, so he was replaced by Rob Hague from S*M*A*S*H. We'd just been to America, which was distracting. Also, we just weren't equipped to deal with people, socially. Britpop had happened and Blur, Suede and Oasis all seemed able to play the game better than us – we just came across as rude. On the day of the last show there was no big fight, just a very weird vibe. Without it being spoken, we knew it was over. We had romanticised our failings to such an extent they became self-fulfilling. Someone set off a massive flare at the end, someone else kicked a football on-stage – and that was it. A bizarre finale. Afterwards Pat stuck a pin in the map and fled to Tonga, and Boag and I sought reinvention in Mo Solid Gold, who signed to EMI. We put an album out and our big US tour was due to kick off in New York the day after 9/11. Doomed again. If These Animal Men had an influence that's incredible; like us, The Libertines seemed to have no ambitions beyond getting to the end of each day. We too were fearless – thought we'd be young forever. We were either too early or just too much for people.

Ben Myers

*These Animal Men and S*M*A*S*H play Heaven, London on September 11. Flawed Is Beautiful, a documentary, is forthcoming.*

Martyn Goodacre (2)

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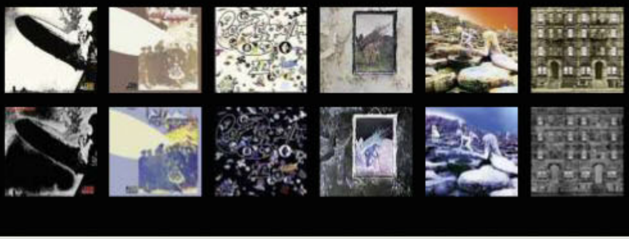

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